





Margaret Howell.





# Rural Rides

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WILLIAM COBBETT

*“The classics are always modern.”*

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON



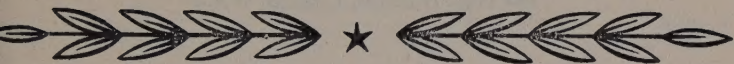
# *Rural Rides*



BORN MARCH 9, 1762

DIED JUNE 18, 1835

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# Rural Rides

*by William Cobbett*

Abridged and Edited by  
S. E. BUCKLEY B.A.



*George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.*

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## INTRODUCTION

THERE is a strange but persistent tendency among some students of English literature either to ignore William Cobbett altogether or to dismiss him with a wave of the hand and a few remarks about his violent opinions, his change of political views, and his lack of logic. Most rugged, forceful things are illogical. One does not dismiss Ben Nevis from consideration because it lacks the geometrical regularity of a pyramid, despise the cliffs of Cornwall as wanting in the precision of a terrace wall, or criticize Dartmoor on the score that it is capricious in its moods and fails to maintain the orderliness of a well-kept park. Admirable as logical, calm reasoning may be, the numerous admirers of Cobbett are prepared to see it sacrificed here and there when in exchange they find honest passion nobly expressed in unaffected English.

It follows, therefore, that one can never be quite certain as to just the amount of introduction Cobbett needs. Though he has never developed into a cult, devotees of his have a habit of turning up in the most unexpected places. To such this Introduction can merely serve as an explanation why the publishers have seen fit to issue this edition of the *Rural Rides*. But there must be many to whom Cobbett is as yet unexplored territory, and it is for them primarily that these details are prepared. They will not be exhaustive; they make no claim to be scholarly; they try to avoid any touch of the merely academic; but they do seek to give enough information to bring alive the figure of Cobbett setting forth, suitably clad and well mounted, upon his tours of the English countryside. It is not denied that the *Rides* provide enjoyable reading even without any previous knowledge of the writer. Yet they are so essentially personal, so full of what Hazlitt calls "delightful egotism," that, in order to obtain the fullest pleasure, we need to know enough to see his work in association with the man himself.

The comparison has been used many times, but is well summed up by Entwistle and Gillett in *The Literature of England* when they say, "One who looks among Englishmen for a typical John Bull might well decide that the character was wholly unrepresentative,

unless his eye should light upon Cobbett." Here was a man born in the country, thoroughly peasant in background and ancestry, brought up on the land, experiencing its life and work at first hand, and developing a forthright, vigorous English style in which to express all he knew and felt about that life. His origins combined two of the most potent ingredients of English country life, for Cobbett senior was both innkeeper and farmer. Cobbett himself was born at The Jolly Farmer, Farnham, in Surrey, on March 9, 1762, when the Seven Years War, in which England was winning Canada from France, was drawing to a close. He died in 1835, two years before Victoria came to the throne, and into the seventy-two years of his life packed an experience as varied as it was tempestuous. And yet there was about it a wholeness which helps us to see Cobbett as a very real and definite figure. A wide experience in itself is not enough, for often variety merely means ineffectiveness, a result of not knowing exactly what one wants to do. But there is nothing of this about Cobbett. Whether he was improving his own knowledge of English language and literature, seeking to obtain better conditions for the army, teaching English to French refugees in Nova Scotia, or advocating newer methods in English agriculture and more security for its labourers, he was aiming always at an advance and displaying a tremendous faculty for hard work.

Some knowledge of the course of his life is therefore important if we are to appreciate his work properly and see it in its true perspective. He had little regular education and was a clear example of the self-made man. Of this he was inordinately, and quite justifiably, proud, and never tired, even to the point of priggery, of using himself and his achievements as examples to illustrate any point he wished to make. We may smile at this foible, but so ingenuous is Cobbett's delight in himself that our smile is nothing harsher than one of good-humoured tolerance. As Hazlitt says :

He does not talk about himself for lack of something to write about, but because some circumstance that has happened to himself is the best possible illustration of the subject, and he is not the man to shrink from giving the best possible illustration of the subject from a squeamish delicacy. He likes both himself and his subject too well.

And it is easy to see how in such a life as his he was bound to accumulate an amazing wealth of experience. His early days were spent in the fields, where he was sent to work as soon as he was able. From his birth, therefore, he was in close contact with English farming and its conditions. This was probably the major influence in his life, and it is certain that it was at the core of his best work. However varied his experiences and pursuits, this stable feature runs throughout. Even at his busiest period, when he was publishing his *Weekly Register*, his *Parliamentary Debates*, and various historical works, he was at the same time experimenting enthusiastically in improved agricultural methods on his estate at Botley, Hampshire.

Whatever, therefore, happened to be his immediate occupation, or wherever he was situated, his roots were firmly planted in the soil of England. He was not, however, content to remain a farm labourer, and eventually, at the age of twenty-one, we find him in London employed as a copying clerk in a lawyer's office, a job with which he was not long satisfied. Inspired by a sight of the fleet, he sought to join the Navy; rejected for this, he entered a line regiment, in which he was drafted to Nova Scotia as an N.C.O. Success as a soldier had not lessened his determination to improve both his own education and other people's. A chance purchase of Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* in his early years had fired his enthusiasm to write. With characteristic energy he mastered the rules of English grammar and read widely in the English classics. His study of the former bore fruit in *A Grammar of the English Language*, while his reading of the works of others prompted a literary activity on his own part that gave us such diverse contributions from his pen as pamphlets, monthly and weekly journals, histories, books on gardening, sermons, guides to the young, books of travel, and so on. All have one feature in common—Cobbett's zeal for reform and improvement, expressed throughout with force and vigour. Often this zeal overcame him and trouble followed. When his regiment returned to England in 1791 Cobbett, who had now reached the rank of sergeant-major, obtained his discharge with honourable mention. Then, incensed by what he had seen during his service abroad, he brought charges of embezzlement against his former officers. Inability to obtain the evidence requisite to support the charge led to the failure of Cobbett's efforts, so he wrote *The*

*Soldier's Friend* in order to influence the cause of improved pay for soldiers. When conditions began to be rather hot for him in England he fled to France and thence to Philadelphia. After seven and a half years' residence there he found himself in troubled waters in the form of a libel action, and returned to England. Here he commenced, in 1802, his famous *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, which continued, with some slight breaks, till his death thirty-three years later. Originally issued at sixpence, it was afterwards reduced to twopence per copy and became known as 'Cobbett's Twopenny Trash.' Other works of his were the *Parliamentary Debates*—soon to become the famous Hansard; *Porcupine's Works*—a monumental twelve-volume collection of his writings; *Cobbett's Sermons*; *Cottage Economy*; *A Parliamentary History of England from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the Year 1803*; *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials*; *A Journal of a Year's Residence in America*; *The American Gardener*; *The English Gardener*; *A History of the Protestant Reformation*; *Advice to Young Men*; and a great deal more, all of it robust and much of it violent. In politics he gradually veered round from Tory to independent reformer and thence to definite Radical, while the routine of his life was from time to time interrupted by stormy episodes. An article on military flogging resulted in a fine of one thousand pounds and two years in prison. He came out of prison financially bankrupt but greatly improved as a writer. The reduction in price of his *Weekly Register* from sixpence to twopence enormously increased its circulation, and the journal attained great influence among the working classes. Yet once again he had to escape from trouble and spent two years in America, farming, and sending his articles regularly to London. He returned in 1821, opened a seed-farm at Kensington, and commenced his series of tours of the English countryside on horseback—the *Rural Rides*. It was inevitable that such a zealous reformer should seek to enter Parliament, and, after failure at Coventry and Preston, Cobbett was finally elected to represent Oldham. Yet he was but an indifferent parliamentarian, and had his fame depended on his work as an M.P. he would have had none. His own times knew him as a pamphleteer and journalist; we associate his name with his *Rural Rides*, though much of his other work is of a high standard and well worth perusal.



Hazlitt's description of his appearance should be noticed:

The only time I ever saw him he seemed to me a very pleasant man—easy of access, affable, clear-headed, simple and mild in his manner, deliberate and unruffled in his speech, though some of his expressions were not very qualified. His figure is tall and portly; he has a good, sensible face—rather full, with little grey eyes, a hard square forehead, a ruddy complexion, with hair grey or powdered; and had on a scarlet broadcloth waistcoat, with the flaps of the pockets hanging down, as was the custom for gentleman-farmers in the last century, or as we see it in the pictures of Members of Parliament in the reign of George I. I certainly did not think less favourably of him for seeing him.

We should not expect such a man, with his upbringing and experience, to be a polished stylist, concentrating on the well-turned phrase and the carefully balanced period. He had no time for that. He always wrote because he had something to say which he felt demanded attention, and he saw to it that it secured attention, even though he had to club the hearer into giving heed. Hazlitt speaks of his "great mutton-fist"; others have likened his style to a cudgel; he himself in Letter XXIII of his *English Grammar* says; "Never stop to make choice of words. Put down your thoughts in words just as they come. Follow the order which your thought will point out; and it will push you on to get it upon paper as quickly and as clearly as possible." But linked with that is the very sound principle: "Never write about any matter that you do not well understand. If you clearly understand all about your matter, you will never want thoughts, and thoughts instantly become words." Combined with these guiding principles is a passionate belief in whatever he had to say, an inflexible idea that he is the best man to say it, and his experiences the most apposite to provide the necessary illustrations. Hence all his writing is vital. He is not always logical, for there are no half-measures with Cobbett. He gives advice to young men, and lays about himself royally, whether in attacking "the tea and coffee and other slop-kettle," or in describing how he "used, both in France and America, to romp most famously with the girls that came in my way," or in attacking the system of vaccination. He was a born fighter, and when he wrote on any subject he felt strongly about it. Strong feelings do not always lend themselves to clear thinking, but they do ensure that the

writing is full of vitality. Zest is the keynote of his style, for he was a realist who dealt in facts and had little or no interest in mere academic opinions. Whenever he had some point to make he illustrated it from personal experience.

It follows, therefore, that the topics on which he wrote with most eloquence and charm were those in which personal experience played a major part, and of those the most outstanding was the countryside of England and its pursuits. These he knew at first hand and loved with an enduring devotion. His observation was keen, and his judgment of rural life and conditions was based on long experience. What he saw he could portray with force and conviction. Hence the value and the attraction of his *Rural Rides*, where he writes on the subject nearest his heart. There are plenty of digressions from the main theme; a chance encounter or a mere reminder is sufficient to set him off on a long and violent tirade against some abomination of his and epithets are hurled to left and right. There is mere abuse in plenty—but Cobbett soon returns to vivid and wholesome descriptions of all he saw, shrewd observations on agricultural methods, and sympathetic accounts of country folk and their life.

It is to introduce readers to this supremely realistic part of Cobbett's writing that the present edition has been prepared. It is an abridgment and makes no apology or excuse for being such. All critics of Cobbett are unanimous on at least one point—that the best part of his work is that which deals with the land. This is the aspect of his writing presented in the following pages. The chief aim of this edition is to introduce Cobbett to those to whom he is very little more than a mere name. Hence the less attractive—though not unattractive—portions of the *Rural Rides* have been omitted and their place taken by connecting links which, it is believed, will preserve the continuity of the work and make it acceptable even to old admirers. Our own age has seen a revived interest in the countryside and its work. Mechanized road traffic has had much to do with this, and war-time evacuation encouraged it, particularly among young town-dwellers. The War also demonstrated the full possibilities of English agriculture and stressed its importance as one of our major industries. Cobbett lived in an age of rural depression, and he was a leader of reforms for English farming, advocating new methods and seeking to improve the general conditions of trade. Our national Press is full of

ideas for country planning, to include the preservation of rural amenities and regulate the growth of urban areas. Cobbett, too, has much to say on the disproportionate spread of towns—"Wens" as he characteristically called them. So, his problems being often the same as ours, we read him with sympathetic interest and not as one whose ideas have been outmoded by the passage of time.

Here, then, is presented much of the face of rural England in the early nineteenth century, in honest-to-goodness, forceful prose, full of punch, and sincere throughout. Those whose appetites are whetted by the fare here offered can find more to please their palates in *Advice to Young Men and (Incidentally) to Young Women*, or in *The English Gardener*, or in *Porcupine's Works*, or in *A History of the Protestant Reformation*. And none should fail to look into his *Grammar of the English Language* and take with "little James" the "first step in the road to literary knowledge."

S. E. B.



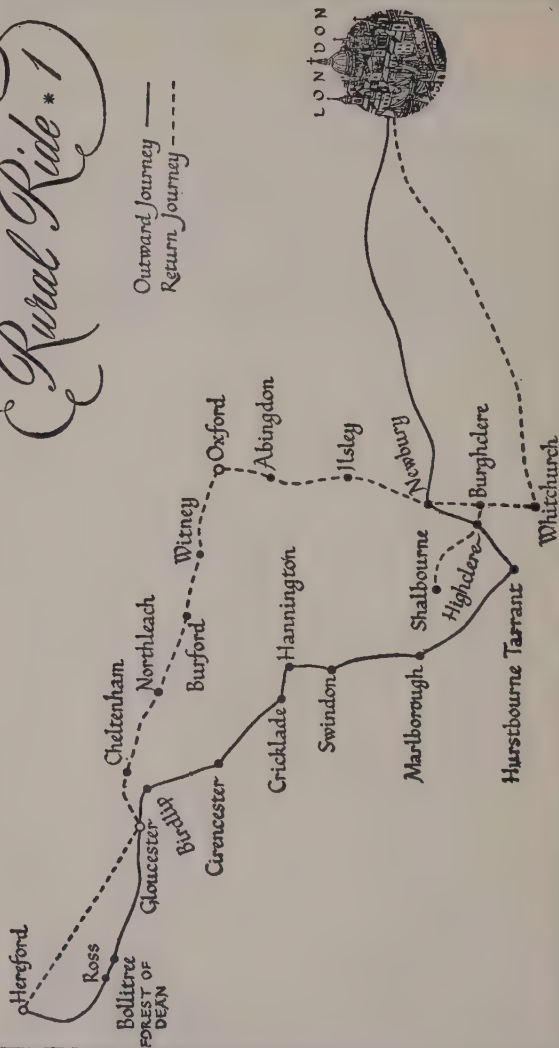
## NOTE ON THE ROUTE CHARTS

ROUTE charts are provided for the more extensive tours only, and not for short rides such as those from London to Faversham or London to Tring. The modern spelling of place-names has been used throughout on the charts. Readers who have inch-to-the-mile maps of any of the districts will gain considerable interest from following the various journeys on these, since they show the topographical details to which Cobbett frequently draws attention.



Rural Ride \* 1

Outward Journey —  
Return Journey - - - -



# I

*A Ride from London, through Newbury, Burghclere, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Marlborough, and Cirencester, to Gloucester, Bollitree, Ross, and Hereford, returning via Cheltenham, Oxford, Abingdon, Burghclere, and Whitchurch*

COBBETT sets out from Kensington on Tuesday, October 30, 1821, in a thick fog that prevents his seeing much of the countryside between London and Newbury. This seems to have no ill effect on his good spirits. He distinguishes between wet and dry fogs, recalling his own experiences, and comparing English and American scenes. He describes particularly the beautiful effects which resulted from low-lying fog in a certain valley in Philadelphia. Always a staunch advocate of the advantages of transplanting, he is interested in crops of "swedish turnips." He passes a house and its grounds, to the design of which the owner has obviously devoted much care and money. We are left in no doubt as to Cobbett's opinion of the results :

Came through a place called "a park" belonging to a Mr Montague, who is now *abroad* ; for the purpose, I suppose, of generously assisting to compensate the French people for what they lost by the entrance of the Holy Alliance Armies into their country. Of all the ridiculous things I ever saw in my life this place is the most ridiculous. The house looks like a sort of church, in somewhat of a gothic style of building, with *crosses* on the tops of different parts of the pile. There is a sort of swamp, at the foot of a wood, at no great distance from the front of the house. This swamp has been dug out in the middle to show the water to the eye ; so that there is a sort of river, or chain of diminutive lakes, going down a little valley, about 500 yards long, the water proceeding from the *soak* of the higher ground on both sides. By the sides of these lakes there are little flower gardens, laid out in the Dutch manner ; that is to say, cut out into all manner of superficial geometrical figures. Here is the *grand en petit* or mock magnificence, more complete than I ever beheld it before. Here is a *fountain*, the basin of which is not four feet over, and the water spout not exceeding the pour from a tea-pot.

Here is a *bridge* over a *river* of which a child four years old would clear the banks at a jump. I could not have trusted myself on the bridge for fear of the consequences to Mr Montague; but I very conveniently stepped over the river, in imitation of the *Colossus*. In another part there was a *lion's mouth* spouting out water into the lake, which was so much like the vomiting of a dog, that I could almost have pitied the poor Lion. In short, such fooleries I never before beheld; but what I disliked most was the apparent impiety of a part of these works of refined taste. I did not like the crosses on the dwelling house; but, in one of the gravel walks, we had to pass under a gothic arch, with a cross on the top of it, and in the point of the arch a niche for a saint or a virgin, the figure being gone through the lapse of centuries, and the pedestal only remaining as we so frequently see on the outsides of Cathedrals and of old churches and chapels. But the good of it was, this gothic arch, disfigured by the hand of old Father Time, was composed of Scotch fir wood, as rotten as a pear; nailed together in such a way as to make the thing appear, from a distance, like the remnant of a ruin! I wonder how long this sickly, this childish, taste is to remain?

Nothing could restore his equanimity better than his favourite pastime of hare-hunting, for which he finds opportunity both on Tuesday and on Wednesday:

At the end of this scene of mock grandeur and mock antiquity I found something more rational; namely, some hare hounds, and, in half-an-hour after, we found, and I had the first hare-hunt that I had had since I wore a smock-frock! We killed our hare after good sport, and got to Berghclere in the evening to a nice farmhouse in a dell, sheltered from every wind, and with plenty of good living; though with no gothic arches made of Scotch-fir!

October 31. *Wednesday*

A fine day. Too many hares here; but, our hunting was not bad; or, at least, it was a great treat to me, who used, when a boy, to have my legs and thighs so often filled with thorns in running after the hounds, anticipating with pretty great certainty, a "*waling*" of the back at night. We had grey-hounds a part of the day; but the ground on the hills is so *flinty*, that I do not like

the country for coursing. The dogs' legs are presently cut to pieces.

He sees more examples of the satisfactory results to be obtained from transplanting—swedish turnips, mangel-wurzels, and cabbages, all “very fine indeed.” On Friday, November 2, he reaches Hurstbourne Tarrant, in Hampshire, having found on his way through Highclere an estate much more to his liking than that of Mr Montague:

I came from Berghclere this morning, and through the park of Lord Caernarvon, at Highclere. It is a fine season to look at woods. The oaks are still covered, the beeches in their best dress, the elms yet pretty green, and the beautiful ashes only beginning to turn off. This is, according to my fancy, the prettiest park that I have ever seen. A great variety of hill and dell. A good deal of water, and this, in one part, only wants the *colours* of American trees to make it look like a “*creek*”; for the water runs along at the foot of a steepish hill, thickly covered with trees, and the branches of the lowermost trees hang down into the water and hide the bank completely. I like this place better than *Fonthill*, *Blenheim*, *Stowe*, or any other gentleman's grounds that I have seen. The *house* I did not care about, though it appears to be large enough to hold half a village. The trees are very good, and the woods would be handsomer if the larches and firs were *burnt*, for which only they are fit. The great beauty of the place is, the *lofty downs*, as steep, in some places, as the roof of a house, which form a sort of boundary, in the form of a part of a crescent, to about a third part of the park, and then slope off and get more distant, for about half another third part. A part of these downs is covered with trees, chiefly beech, the colour of which, at this season, forms a most beautiful contrast with that of the down itself, which is so green and so smooth! From the vale in the park, along which we rode, we looked apparently almost perpendicularly up at the downs, where the trees have extended themselves by seed more in some places than others, and thereby formed numerous salient parts of various forms, and, of course, as many and as variously formed glades. These, which are always so beautiful in forests and parks, are peculiarly beautiful in this lofty situation and with

verdure so smooth as that of these chalky downs. Our horses beat up a score or two of hares as we crossed the park; and, though we met with no *gothic arches* made of Scotch-fir, we saw something a great deal better; namely, about forty cows, the most beautiful that I ever saw, as to colour at least. They appear to be of the Galway-breed. They are called, in this country, *Lord Caernarvon's breed*. They have no horns, and their colour is a ground of white with black or red spots, these spots being from the size of a plate to that of a crown-piece; and some of them have no small spots. These cattle were lying down together in the space of about an acre of ground: they were in excellent condition, and so fine a sight of the kind I never saw.

Such an estate sets him wondering how long the owner will be able to maintain it, and he writes with his usual forthright vigour on the depressed state of agricultural prices and of the futility of so-called "remedies." Italics are liberally used, and we hear of Cobbett's own efforts to secure improvement—"My endeavours to stop the evil in time cost me the earnings of twenty long years." His Journal for Sunday and Monday, November 4 and 5, describes the country as seen through the eyes of one who was both attracted by its beauty and alive to its agricultural pursuits:

Nov. 4. *Sunday*

This, to my fancy, is a very nice country. It is continual hill and dell. Now and then a *chain* of hills higher than the rest, and these are downs or woods. To stand upon any of the hills and look around you, you almost think you see the ups and downs of sea in a *heavy swell* (as the sailors call it) after what they call a gale of wind. The undulations are endless, and the great variety in the height, breadth, length, and form of the little hills, has a very delightful effect.—The soil, which, to look *on* it, appears to be more than half flint stones, is very good in quality, and, in general, better on the tops of the lesser hills than in the valleys. It has great tenacity; does not *wash away* like sand, or light loam. It is a stiff, tenacious loam, mixed with flint stones. Bears saint-foin well, and all sorts of grass, which make the fields on the hills as green as meadows, even at this season; and the grass does not burn up in summer.—In a country so full of hills one would expect endless runs of water and springs. There are none: absolutely none. No water-furrow is ever made in the land.



No ditches round the fields. And, even in the *deep valleys*, such as that in which this village is situated, though it winds round for ten or fifteen miles, there is no run of water even now. There is the *bed* of a brook, which will run before spring, and it continues running with more or less water for about half the year, though, some years, it never runs at all. It rained all Friday night; pretty nearly all day yesterday; and to-day the ground is as dry as a bone, except just along the street of the village, which has been kept in a sort of stabble by the flocks of sheep passing along to and from Appleshaw fair. In the deep and long and narrow valleys, such as this, there are meadows with very fine herbage and very productive. The grass very fine and excellent in its quality. It is very curious, that the soil is much *shallower* in the vales than on the hills. In the vales it is a sort of hazle-mould on a bed of something approaching to gravel; but, on the hills, it is stiff loam, with apparently half flints, on a bed of something like clay first (reddish, not yellow) and then comes the chalk, which they often take up by digging a sort of wells; and then they spread it on the surface, as they do the clay in some countries, where they sometimes fetch it many miles and at an immense expense. It was very common, near Botley, to chalk land at an expense of sixteen pounds an acre.—The land here is excellent in quality generally, unless you get upon the highest chains of hills. They have frequently 40 bushels of wheat to the acre. Their barley is very fine; and their saint-foin abundant. The turnips are, in general, very good at this time; and the land appears as capable of carrying fine crops of them as any land that I have seen. A fine country for sheep: always dry; they never injure the land when feeding off turnips in wet weather; and they can lie down on the dry; for the ground is, in fact, never wet except while the rain is actually falling. Sometimes, in spring-thaws and thunder-showers, the rain runs down the hills in torrents; but is gone directly. The flocks of sheep, some in fold and some at large, feeding on the sides of the hills, give great additional beauty to the scenery.—The woods, which consist chiefly of oak thinly intermixed with ash, and well set with underwood of ash and hazel, but mostly the latter, are very beautiful. They sometimes stretch along the top and sides of hills for miles together; and, as their edges, or out-sides, joining the fields and the downs, go winding and twisting about, and as the fields and downs are naked of trees, the sight

altogether is very pretty.—The trees in the deep and long valleys, especially the elm and the ash, are very fine and very lofty; and, from distance to distance, the rooks have made them their habitation.—This sort of country, which, in irregular shape, is of great extent, has many and great advantages. Dry under foot. Good roads, winter as well as summer, and little, very little expense. Saint-foin flourishes. Fences cost little. Wood, hurdles, and hedging-stuff cheap. No shade in wet harvests. The water in the wells excellent. Good sporting country, except for coursing, and too many flints for that.—What becomes of all the *water*? There is a spring, in one of the cross valleys that runs into this, having a basin about thirty feet over, and about eight feet deep, which they say sends up water once in about 30 or 40 years; and boils up so as to make a large current of water.—Not far from Uphusband the *Wansdike* (I think it is called) crosses the country. Sir Richard Colt Hoare has written a great deal about this ancient boundary, which is, indeed, something very curious. In the ploughed fields the traces of it are quite gone; but they remain in the *woods* as well as on the downs.

*Nov. 5. Monday*

A *white frost* this morning. The hills round about beautiful at sun-rise, the rooks making that noise which they always make in winter mornings. The starlings are come in large flocks; and, which is deemed a sign of a hard winter, the fieldfares are come at an early season. The haws are very abundant; which, they say, is another sign of a hard winter. The wheat is high enough here, in some fields, “to hide a hare,” which is, indeed, not saying much for it, as a hare knows how to hide herself upon the bare ground. But it is, in some fields, four inches high, and is green and gay, the colour being finer than that of any grass.—The fuel here is wood. Little coal is brought from Andover. A load of faggots does not cost above 10s. So that, in this respect, the labourers are pretty well off. The wages here and in Berkshire, about 8s. a week; but the farmers talk of lowering them.

Then Cobbett goes on to give further and more detailed examples of the low market-prices prevailing up and down the country, sheep, fat hogs, cheese, cows, and wheat being sold at absurdly low figures. He maintains that certain bankruptcy faces the farmers. The country banks of his time come in for one of his spirited

attacks, being labelled, in the true Cobbett manner, as "rag merchants"—a scornful reference to their issues of bank-notes. November 6 and 7 find him at Marlborough and Cirencester, where he writes:

MARLBOROUGH,  
*Tuesday noon, Nov. 6*

I left Uphusband this morning at 9, and came across to this place (20 miles) in a post-chaise. Came up the valley of Uphusband, which ends at about 6 miles from the village, and puts one out upon the Wiltshire downs, which stretch away towards the west and south-west, towards Devizes and towards Salisbury. After about half a mile of down we came down into a level country; the flints cease, and the chalk comes nearer the top of the ground. The labourers along here seem very poor indeed. Farm houses with twenty ricks round each, besides those standing in the fields; pieces of wheat, 50, 60, or 100 acres in a piece; but a group of women labourers, who were attending the measurers to measure their reaping work, presented such an assemblage of rags as I never before saw even amongst the hoppers at Farnham, many of whom are common beggars. I never before saw *country* people, and reapers too, observe, so miserable in appearance as these. There were some very pretty girls, but ragged as colts and as pale as ashes. The day was cold too, and frost hardly off the ground; and their blue arms and lips would have made any heart ache but that of a seat-seller or a loan-jobber. Marlborough, which is an ill-looking place enough, is succeeded, on my road to Swindon, by an extensive and very beautiful down about 4 miles over. Here nature has flung the earth about in a great variety of shapes. The fine short smooth grass has about 9 inches of mould under it, and then comes the chalk. The water that runs down the narrow side-hill valleys is caught, in different parts of the down, in basins made on purpose, and lined with clay apparently. This is for watering the sheep in summer; sure sign of a really dry soil; and yet the grass never *parches* upon these downs. The chalk holds the moisture, and the grass is fed by the dews in hot and dry weather.—At the end of this down the high-country ends. The hill is high and steep, and from it you look immediately down into a level farming country; a little further on into the dairy-country, whence the North-Wilts cheese comes; and, beyond that, into the vale of Berkshire, and even to Oxford, which lies

away to the north-east from this hill.—The land continues good, flat and rather wet to Swindon, which is a plain country town, built of the stone which is found at about 6 feet under ground about here.—I come on now towards Cirencester, through the dairy country of North Wilts.

CIRENCESTER,

*Wednesday (noon), 7 Nov.*

I slept at a dairy-farm house at Hannington, about eight miles from Swindon, and five on one side of my road. I passed through that villainous hole, Cricklade, about two hours ago; and, certainly, a more rascally looking place I never set my eyes on. I wished to avoid it, but could get along no other way. All along here the land is a whitish stiff loam upon a bed of soft stone, which is found at various distances from the surface, sometimes two feet and sometimes ten. Here and there a field is fenced with this stone, laid together in walls without mortar or earth. All the houses and out-houses are made of it, and even covered with the thinnest of it formed into tiles. The stiles in the fields are made of large flags of this stone, and the gaps in the hedges are stopped with them.—There is very little wood all along here. The labourers seem miserably poor. Their dwellings are little better than pig-beds, and their looks indicate that their food is not nearly equal to that of a pig. Their wretched hovels are stuck upon little bits of ground *on the road side*, where the space has been wider than the road demanded. In many places they have not two rods to a hovel. It seems as if they had been swept off the fields by a hurricane, and had dropped and found shelter under the banks on the road side! Yesterday morning was a sharp frost; and this had set the poor creatures to digging up their little plats of potatoes. In my whole life I never saw human wretchedness equal to this: no, not even amongst the free negroes in America, who, on an average, do not work one day out of four.

Here it is still the same story—agricultural land of great possibilities, with fine cattle and sheep being driven to market. Yet low prices result in human hardship and the matter cries out for urgent reform. The high Cotswold country with its stone walls does not appeal to Cobbett at all, but he is delighted with the view from the top of Birdlip Hill. At Gloucester he records his impressions:

GLoucester,  
*Thursday (morning), Nov. 8*

In leaving Cirencester, which is a pretty large town, a pretty nice town, and which the people call *Cititer*, I came up hill into a country, apparently formerly a down or common, but now divided into large fields by stone walls. Anything so ugly I have never seen before. The stone, which, on the other side of Cirencester, lay a good way under ground, here lies very near to the surface. The plough is continually bringing it up, and thus, in general, come the means of making the walls that serve as fences. Anything quite so cheerless as this I do not recollect to have seen; for the Bagshot country, and the commons between Farnham and Haslemere, have *heath* at any rate; but these stones are quite abominable. With the exception of a little dell about eight miles from *Cititer*, this miserable country continued to the distance of ten miles, when, all of a sudden, I looked down from the top of a high hill into *the vale of Gloucester*! Never was there, surely, such a contrast in this world! This hill is called *Burlip Hill*; it is much about a mile down it, and the descent so steep as to require the wheel of the chaise to be locked; and, even with that precaution, I did not think it over and above safe to sit in the chaise; so, upon Sir Robert Wilson's principle of taking care of *Number One*, I got out and walked down. From this hill you see the Morvan Hills in Wales. You look down into a sort of *dish* with a flat bottom, the Hills are the sides of the dish, and the City of Gloucester, which you plainly see, at seven miles distance from *Burlip Hill*, appears to be not far from the centre of the dish. All here is fine; fine farms; fine pastures; all inclosed fields; all divided by hedges; orchards a plenty; and I had scarcely seen one apple since I left Berkshire.—Gloucester is a fine, clean, beautiful place; and, which is of a vast deal more importance, the labourer's dwellings, as I came along, looked good, and the labourers themselves pretty well as to dress and healthiness. The girls at work in the fields (always my standard) are not in rags, with bits of shoes tied on their feet and rags tied round their ankles, as they had in Wiltshire.

From Gloucester on Friday, November 9, he crosses the Severn into Herefordshire, and the farmer in him rejoices in all that his



keen eye observes. In his comparisons we can see the influences of the years spent in America :

BOLLITREE CASTLE, HEREFORDSHIRE,  
*Friday, 9 Nov. 1821*

I got to this beautiful place (Mr William Palmer's) yesterday, from Gloucester. This is in the parish of *Weston*, two miles on the Gloucester side of Ross, and, if not the first, nearly the first, parish in Herefordshire upon leaving Gloucester to go on through Ross to Hereford.—On quitting Gloucester I crossed the Severne, which had overflowed its banks and covered the meadows with water.—The soil good but stiff. The coppices and woods very much like those upon the clays in the south of Hampshire and in Sussex ; but the land better for corn and grass. The goodness of the land is shown by the apple-trees, and by the sort of sheep and cattle fed here. The sheep are a cross between the Ryland and Leicester, and the cattle of the Herefordshire kind. These would starve in the pastures of any part of Hampshire or Sussex that I have ever seen.—At about seven miles from Gloucester I came to hills, and the land changed from the whitish soil, which I had hitherto seen, to a red brown, with layers of flat stone of a reddish cast under it. Thus it continued to Bollitree. The trees of all kinds are very fine on the hills as well as in the bottoms.—The spot where I now am is peculiarly well situated in all respects. The land very rich, the pastures the finest I ever saw, the trees of all kinds surpassing upon an average any that I have before seen in England. From the house, you see, in front and winding round to the left, a lofty hill, called *Penyard Hill*, at about a mile and a half distance, covered with oaks of the finest growth ; along at the foot of this wood are fields and orchards continuing the slope of the hill down for a considerable distance, and, as the ground lies in a sort of *ridges* from the wood to the foot of the slope, the hill-and-dell is very beautiful. One of these dells with the two adjoining sides of hills is an orchard belonging to Mr Palmer, and the trees, the ground, and everything belonging to it, put me in mind of the most beautiful of the spots in the North of Long Island. Sheltered by a lofty wood ; the grass fine beneath the fruit trees ; the soil dry under foot though the rain had scarcely ceased to fall ; no moss on the trees ; the leaves of many of them yet green ; everything brought my mind to the

beautiful orchards near Bayside, Little Neck, Mosquito Cove, and Oyster Bay, in Long Island. No wonder that this is a country of *cider* and *perry*; but what a shame it is, that here, at any rate, the owners and cultivators of the soil, not content with these, should, for mere fashion's sake, waste their substance on *wine* and *spirits*! They really deserve the contempt of mankind and the curses of their children.—The woody hill mentioned before, winds away to the left, and carries the eye on to the *Forest of Dean*, from which it is divided by a narrow and very deep valley. Away to the right of Penyard Hill lies, in the bottom, at two miles distance, and on the bank of the river Wye, the town of Ross, over which we look down the vale to Monmouth and see the Welsh hills beyond it. Beneath Penyard Hill, and on one of the *ridges* before mentioned, is the parish church of Weston, with some pretty white cottages near it, peeping through the orchard and other trees; and coming to the paddock before the house, are some of the largest and loftiest trees in the country, standing singly here and there, amongst which is the very largest and loftiest walnut-tree that I believe I ever saw, either in America or in England. In short, there wants nothing but the autumnal *colours* of the American trees to make this the most beautiful spot I ever beheld.—I was much amused for an hour after daylight this morning in looking at the *clouds*, rising, at intervals, from the dells on the side of Penyard Hill, and flying to the top, and then over the hill. Some of the clouds went up in a roundish and compact form. Others rose in a sort of string or stream, the tops of them going over the hill before the bottoms were clear of the place whence they had arisen. Sometimes the clouds gathered themselves together along the top of the hill, and seemed to connect the topmost trees with the sky.

There follows an enthusiastic account of Mr Palmer's success in growing swedish turnips, or 'swedes,' in accordance with the plan of cultivation advocated by Cobbett himself. Transplanting is compared with merely sowing in drills and with the old method of scattering the seed broadcast. Cobbett goes into great detail on the treatment employed and gives crop figures to prove the value of his own system. Mr Palmer has also grown a fine lot of cabbages.

Mr Palmer greatly prefers the *transplanting* to the drilling. It has numerous advantages over the drilling; greater regularity of



crop, greater certainty, the only *sure* way of avoiding the *fly*, greater crop, admitting of two months later preparation of land, can come *after vetches* cut up for horses (as, indeed, a part of Mr Palmer's transplanted swedes did), and requiring less labour and expense. I asserted this in my *Year's Residence*; and Mr Palmer, who has been very particular in ascertaining the fact, states positively, that the expense of transplanting is not so great as the hoeing and setting out of the drilled crops, and not so great as the common hoeings of broad-cast. This, I think, settles the question. But the advantages of the wide-row culture by no means confine themselves to the green and root crop; for Mr Palmer drills his wheat upon the same ridges, without ploughing, after he has taken off the swedes. He drills it at *eight inches*, and puts in from eight to ten gallons to the acre. His crop of 1820, drilled in this way, averaged 40 bushels to the acre; part drilled in November, and part so late as February. It was the common Lammas wheat. His last crop of wheat is not yet ascertained; but it was better after the swedes than in any other of his land. His manner of taking off the crop is excellent. He first cuts off and carries away the *tops*. Then he has an implement, drawn by two oxen, walking on each side of the ridge, with which he cuts off the *tap root* of the swedes without disturbing the land of the ridge. Any child can then pull up the bulb. Thus the ground, clean as a garden, and in that compact state which the wheat is well known to like, is ready, at once, for drilling with wheat.

Cobbett stoutly claims, therefore, that his plan is justified by results, in spite of the attacks—"the slanders, the malignant slanders"—made upon him in the *Farmers' Journal*. He reaches Hereford on November 10 and visits the market:

I went into the market-place, amongst the farmers, with whom, in general, I was very much pleased. If I were to live in the county two months, I should be acquainted with every man of them. The country is very fine all the way from Ross to Hereford. The soil is always a red loam upon a bed of stone. The trees are very fine, and certainly winter comes later here than in Middlesex. Some of the oak trees are still perfectly green, and many of the ashes as green as in September.—In coming from Hereford to this place, which is the residence of Mrs Palmer and that of her two younger sons, Messrs Philip and Walter Palmer,

who, with their brother, had accompanied me to Hereford; in coming to this place, which lies at about two miles distance from the great road, and at about an equal distance from Hereford and from Ross, we met with something, the sight of which pleased me exceedingly: it was that of a very pretty pleasant-looking lady (and *young* too) with two beautiful children, riding in a little sort of chaise-cart, drawn by *an ass*, which she was driving in reins. She appeared to be well known to my friends, who drew up and spoke to her, calling her Mrs *Lock*, or *Locky* (I hope it was not *Lockart*) or some such name. Her husband, who is, I suppose, some young farmer of the neighbourhood, may well call himself Mr *Lucky*; for to have such a wife, and for such a wife to have the good sense to put up with an ass-cart, in order to avoid, as much as possible, feeding those cormorants who gorge on the taxes, is a blessing that falls, I am afraid, to the lot of very few rich farmers. Mrs *Lock* (if that be her name) is a real *practical radical*. Others of us resort to radical coffee and radical tea; and she has a radical carriage.

Cobbett, an uncompromising upholder of such native drinks as cider and perry, hopes that her husband is equally sensible and does not waste his substance in buying wines and spirits! A visit to another farm on Sunday, November 11, tends to give further support to the system of transplanting:

OLD HALL,  
*Sunday night, 11 November*

We have ridden to-day, though in the rain for a great part of the time, over the fine farm of Mr Philip Palmer, at this place, and that of Mr Walter Palmer, in the adjoining parish of Pencoyd. Everything here is good, arable land, pastures, orchards, coppices, and timber trees, especially the elms, many scores of which approach nearly to a hundred feet in height. Mr Philip Palmer has four acres of swedes on four-foot ridges, drilled on the 11th and 14th of May. The plants were very much injured by the *fly*; so much, that it was a question, whether the whole piece ought not to be ploughed up. However, the gaps in the rows were filled up by transplanting; and the ground was twice ploughed between the ridges. The crop here is very fine; and I should think that its weight could not be less than 17 tons to the acre.

With such practical evidence to support him, Cobbett is sure that transplanting will "finally prevail all over England" in spite of the "sap-headed fools" who oppose it because of its association with one of notorious Radical views! A new machine which he sees at Bollitree would almost seem to be a forerunner of the modern tractor-plough:

Returned this morning and rode about the farm, and also about that of Mr Winnal, where I saw, for the first time, a plough going *without being held*. The man drove the three horses that drew the plough, and carried the plough round at the ends; but left it to itself the rest of the time. There was a skim coulter that turned the sward in under the furrow; and the work was done very neatly.

The description of some fine examples of English trees at Bollitree is typical of the keen and knowledgeable eye for woodland that Cobbett displays throughout his writings:

Rode to-day to see a *grove* belonging to Mrs Westphalin, which contains the very finest trees, *oaks*, *chestnuts*, and *ashes*, that I ever saw in England. This grove is worth going from London to Weston to see. The lady, who is very much beloved in her neighbourhood, is, apparently, of the *old school*; and her house and gardens, situated in a beautiful dell, form, I think, the most comfortable looking thing of the kind that I ever saw. If she had known that I was in her grove, I dare say she would have expected it to blaze up in flames.

Then follows a brief diversion on the subject of his reputation as a Radical reformer. But on this occasion he soon returns to his main theme and writes of the Forest of Dean, though again in terms that reveal both the agricultural economist and the politician:

Rode to the Forest of Dean, up a very steep hill. The lanes here are between high banks, and, on the sides of the hills, the road is a rock, the water having, long ago, washed all the earth away. Pretty works are, I find, carried on here, as is the case in all the other *public forests*! Are these things *always* to be carried on in this way? Here is a domain of thirty thousand acres of the finest timber-land in the world, and with coal-mines endless! Is

this worth nothing? Cannot each acre yield ten trees a year? Are not these trees worth a pound a piece? Is not the estate worth three or four hundred thousand pounds a year? And does it yield *anything to the public*, to whom it belongs? But it is useless to waste one's breath in this way. We must have a *reform of the Parliament*: without it the whole thing will fall to pieces.—The only good purpose that these forests answer is that of furnishing a place of being to labourers' families on their skirts; and here their cottages are very neat, and the people look hearty and well, just as they do round the forests in Hampshire. Every cottage has a pig, or two. These graze in the forest, and, in the fall, eat acorns and beech-nuts and the seed of the ash; for, these last, as well as the others, are very full of oil, and a pig that is put to his shifts will pick the seed very nicely out from the husks. Some of these foresters keep cows, and all of them have bits of ground, cribbed, of course, at different times, from the forest: and to what better use can the ground be put? I saw several wheat stubbles from 40 rods to 10 rods. I asked one man how much wheat he had from about 10 rods. He said more than two bushels. Here is bread for three weeks, or more, perhaps; and a winter's straw for the pig besides. Are these things nothing? The dead limbs and old roots of the forest give *fuel*; and how happy are these people, compared with the poor creatures about Great Bedwin and Cricklade, where they have neither land nor shelter, and where I saw the girls carrying home bean and wheat stubble for fuel!

So Cobbett once more attacks the system that allows such poverty. He is particularly bitter against the "monopolising farmer" and his "infernal system" which has swept away several smaller holdings in order to build up one large farm. He claims that a good deal of the evil would be remedied if "the desolating and damnable system of paper money" were abolished.

In returning from the forest we were overtaken by my son, whom I had begged to come from London to see this beautiful country. On the road-side we saw two lazy-looking fellows, in long great coats and bundles in their hands, going into a cottage, "What do you deal in?" said I, to one of them, who had not yet entered the house. "In the *medical way*," said he. And, I find,

that vagabonds of this description are seen all over the country with *tea-licences* in their pockets. They vend *tea*, *drugs*, and *religious tracts*. The first to bring the body into a debilitated state; the second to finish the corporeal part of the business; and the third to prepare the spirit for its separation from the clay! Never was a system so well calculated as the present to degrade, debase, and enslave a people! Law, and, as if that were not sufficient, enormous subscriptions are made; everything that can be done is done to favour these perambulatory impostors in their depredations on the ignorant.

Yet the countryside can produce those who are not so ignorant as to be swindled by such impostors. In the same district Cobbett finds a "leaven of common-sense" demonstrated by a recognition of the value of his own work. The workers at a local paper mill, long-standing readers of the *Weekly Register*, had the bells of Weston church rung to welcome his arrival in the place. He visits Ross, and modern residents in borough-towns will be amused, though perhaps a little startled, by his violent antipathy to the inhabitants of these places.

We came this morning from Bollitree to *Ross-Market*, and, thence, to this place. Ross is an old-fashioned town; but it is very beautifully situated, and if there is little of *finery* in the appearance of the inhabitants, there is also little of *misery*. It is a good, plain country town, or settlement of tradesmen, whose business is that of supplying the wants of the cultivators of the soil. It presents to us nothing of rascality and roguishness of look, which you see on almost every visage in the *borough-towns*, not excepting the visages of the women. I can tell a borough-town from another upon my entrance into it by the nasty, cunning, leering, designing look of the people; a look between that of a bad (for *some* are good) Methodist parson and that of a pick-pocket. I remember, and I never shall forget, the horrid looks of the villains in Devonshire and Cornwall.

He completes his stay in this part of the country by enjoying a full day's hunting with the harriers:

A whole day most delightfully passed a hare-hunting, with a pretty pack of hounds kept here by Messrs Palmer. They put



me upon a horse that seemed to have been made on purpose for me, strong, tall, gentle and bold; and that carried me either over or through everything. I, who am just the weight of a four-bushel sack of good wheat, actually sat on his back from daylight in the morning to dusk (about nine hours), without once setting my foot on the ground. Our ground was at Orcop, a place about four miles distance from this place. We found a hare in a few minutes after throwing off; and in the course of the day, we had to find four, and were never more than ten minutes in finding. A steep and naked ridge, lying between two flat valleys, having a mixture of pretty large fields and small woods, formed our ground. The hares crossed the ridge forward and backward, and gave us numerous views and very fine sport.—I never rode on such steep ground before; and, really, in going up and down some of the craggy places, where the rains had washed the earth from the rocks, I did think, once or twice, of my neck, and how Sidmouth would like to see me.—As to the *cruelty*, as some pretend, of this sport, that point I have, I think, settled, in one of the chapters of my *Year's Residence in America*. As to the expense, a pack, even a full pack of harriers, like this, costs less than two bottles of wine a day with their inseparable concomitants. And as to the *time* thus spent, hunting is inseparable from *early rising*; and with habits of early rising, who ever wanted time for any business?

On Saturday, November 17, Cobbett takes the coach to Oxford, passing through Gloucester, Cheltenham, Northleach, Burford, and Witney. He speaks appreciatively of his stay in Herefordshire—"this beautiful county"—but he likes neither Cheltenham nor the Cotswolds. He has an interesting note on diet:

At *Gloucester* (as there were no meals on the road) we furnished ourselves with nuts and apples, which, first a handful of nuts and then an apple, are, I can assure the reader, excellent and most wholesome fare. They say that nuts of all sorts are unwholesome; if they had been, I should never have written Registers, and if they were now, I should have ceased to write ere this; for, upon an average, I have eaten a pint a day since I left home. In short, I could be very well content to live on nuts, milk, and home-baked bread.



*Cheltenham* is a nasty, ill-looking place, half clown and half cockney. The town is one street about a mile long; but then, at some distance from this street, there are rows of white tenements, with green balconies, like those inhabited by the tax-eaters round London.

Soon after quitting this resort of the lame and the lazy, the gormandising and guzzling, the bilious and the nervous, we proceeded on, between stone walls, over a country little better than that from Cirencester to Burlip-hill.—A very poor, dull, and uninteresting country all the way to Oxford.

His bill for accommodation in Oxford stings Cobbett into a typical outburst against the “drones” to be found in its colleges and “the wasps they send forth.” He rides on through Ilsley and, approaching Newbury, catches sight of something new:

In going along we saw a piece of wheat with cabbage-leaves laid all over it at the distance, perhaps, of eight or ten feet from each other. It was to catch the *slugs*. The slugs, which commit their depredations in the *night*, creep under the leaves in the morning, and by turning up the leaves you come at the slugs, and crush them, or carry them away. But besides the immense daily labour attending this, the slug, in a field sowed with wheat, has a *clod* to creep under at every foot, and will not go five feet to get under a cabbage-leaf. Then again, if the day be *wet*, the slug works by day as well as by night. It is the sun and drought that he shuns, and not the light. Therefore the only effectual way to destroy slugs is, to sow lime, in dust, and *not slaked*. The slug is wet, he has hardly any skin, his *slime* is his covering; the smallest dust of hot lime kills him; and a few bushels to the acre are sufficient. You must sow the lime at *dusk*; for then the slugs are sure to be out. Slugs come after a crop that has long afforded a great deal of shelter from the sun; such as peas and vetches. In gardens they are nursed up by strawberry beds, and by weeds; by asparagus beds; or by any thing that remains for a long time to keep the summer-sun from the earth.

On Tuesday, November 20, he is at Burghclere and therefore within riding distance of the farm where the famous Jethro Tull had lived. Tull, whose book *Horse-hoeing Husbandry* was published

in 1731, was the originator of the method of sowing seeds in drills, and was the inventor of a seed-drill. It is small wonder, therefore, that his disciple Cobbett is anxious to visit this farm.

With Mr. Budd, we rode to-day to see the *Farm of Tull*, at *Shalborne*, in Berkshire. Mr Budd did the same thing with Arthur Young twenty-seven years ago. It was a sort of *pilgrimage*: but, as the distance was ten miles, we thought it best to perform it on horseback. At about two miles from Inkpen we came to the end of our pilgrimage. The farm, which was Mr *Tull's*; where he used the first drill that ever was used; where he practised his husbandry; where he wrote that book, which does so much honour to his memory, and to which the cultivators of England owe so much; this farm is on an open and somewhat bleak spot, in Berkshire, on the borders of Wiltshire, and within a very short distance of a part of Hampshire. The ground is a loam, mixed with flints, and has the chalk at no great distance beneath it. It is, therefore, free from *wet*; needs no water furrows; and is pretty good in its nature. The house, which has been improved by Mr Blandy the present proprietor, is still but a plain farm-house. Mr Blandy has lived here thirty years, and has brought up ten children to man's and woman's estate. Mr Blandy was from home, but Mrs Blandy received and entertained us in a very hospitable manner.—We returned, not along the low land, but along the top of the downs, and through Lord Caernarvon's park, and got home after a very pleasant day.

There was the chance of some hare-hunting at Burghclere. It does not materialize and Cobbett is led to expatiate on the change in the countryside:

We intended to have a hunt; but the fox-hounds came across and rendered it impracticable. As an instance of the change which rural customs have undergone since the hellish paper-system has been so furiously at work, I need only mention the fact, that, forty years ago, there were *five* packs of fox-hounds and *ten* packs of *harriers* kept within *ten miles* of Newbury; and that now there is *one* of the former (kept, too, by *subscription*) and *none* of the latter, except the few couple of dogs kept by Mr Budd! "So much the better," says the shallow fool, who

cannot duly estimate the difference between a resident *native* gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from their childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practising hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country-delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits, and relying, for influence, not upon the good will of the vicinage, but upon the dread of their power.

Mr Budd, on a small piece of land—just over half an acre—has had some excellent results in crop-growing:

I must not quit *Burghclere* without noticing Mr Budd's *radical* swedes and other things. His is but miniature farming; but it is very good, and very interesting. Some time in May, he drilled a piece of swedes on four feet ridges. The fly took them off. He had cabbage and mangel-wurzel plants to put in their stead. Unwilling to turn back the ridges, and thereby bring the dung to the top, he planted the cabbages and mangel-wurzel on the ridges where the swedes had been drilled. This was done in June. Late in July, his neighbour, a farmer Hulbert, had a field of swedes that he was hoeing. Mr Budd now put some manure in the furrows between the ridges, and ploughed a furrow over it from each ridge. On this he planted swedes, taken from farmer Hulbert's field. Thus his plantation consisted of rows of plants *two feet apart*. The result is a prodigious crop. Of the mangel-wurzel (greens and all) he has not less than twenty tons to the acre. He can scarcely have less of the cabbages, some of which are *green savoys* as fine as I ever saw. And of the swedes, many of which weigh from five to nine pounds, he certainly has more than twenty tons to the acre. So that here is a crop of, at the very least, *forty tons to the acre*. This piece is not much more than half an acre; but, he will, perhaps, not find so much cattle food upon any four acres in the county. He is, and long has been, feeding four milch cows, large, fine, and in fine condition, upon cabbages sometimes, and sometimes on mangel-wurzel

leaves. The butter is excellent. Not the smallest degree of bitterness or bad taste of any sort. Fine colour and fine taste. And here, upon not three-quarters of an acre of ground, he has, if he manage the thing well, enough food for these four cows to the month of May! Can any system of husbandry equal this? What would he do with these cows, if he had not this crop? He could not keep one of them, except on hay. And he owes all this crop to transplanting. He thinks that the transplanting, fetching the swede plants and all, might cost him ten or twelve shillings. It was done by women, who had never done such a thing before.

Cobbett returns to Kensington on Friday, November 30, after being away just a month. Near Hartley Row he notices there has been some planting of oak trees—important timber in the days of wooden battleships. In commending this action on the part of the Lady of the Manor he gives an amusing sidelight on his opinion of the works of Dr Samuel Johnson:

The planter here is Lady Mildmay, who is, it seems, Lady of the Manors about here. It is impossible to praise this act of hers too much, especially when one considers her *age*. I beg a thousand pardons! I do not mean to say that her ladyship is *old*; but she has long had grand-children. If her ladyship had been a reader of old dread-death and dread-devil Johnson, that teacher of moping and melancholy, she never would have planted an oak tree. If the writings of this time-serving, mean, dastardly old pensioner had got a firm hold of the minds of the people at large, the people would have been bereft of their very souls. These writings, aided by the charm of pompous sound, were fast making their way, till light, reason, and the French revolution came to drive them into oblivion; or, at least, to confine them to the shelves of repentant, married old rakes, and those of old stock-jobbers with young wives.

So, with a final outburst against the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, Cobbett concludes his Journal of this tour.

## II

### *A Ride from Kensington to Dartford, Rochester, Chatham, and Faversham*

THIS Kentish ride is in definite contrast to the previous one. It is shorter and through much different country, which lacks the type of scenery that Cobbett found most agreeable. The tour extends over five days only. Much of the countryside is under strong urban influence, and there is not that wealth of woodland which always delighted Cobbett. The chief value of the record lies in the way it illustrates his attitude to such problems as the uncontrolled growth of towns—the ‘wens’—and the evils which, he declares, follow lavish national expenditure on unproductive schemes that are not devoted to improving agriculture and the condition of its workers. Cobbett sets out on December 4, 1821, and the first twenty miles seem to be very drab:

*Tuesday, 4 December, 1821*

ELVERTON FARM, NEAR FAVERSHAM, KENT

This is the first time, since I went to France, in 1792, that I have been on this side of *Shooters' Hill*. The land, generally speaking, from Deptford to Dartford is poor, and the surface ugly by nature, to which ugliness there has been made, just before we came to the latter place, a considerable addition by the inclosure of a common, and by the sticking up of some shabby-genteel houses, surrounded with dead fences and things called gardens, in all manner of ridiculous forms, making, all together, the bricks, hurdle-rods and earth say, as plainly as they can speak, “Here dwell *vanity* and *poverty*.”

He feels sure that these “rubbishy, flimsy things” will eventually be swept away and all trace of them vanish. After Dartford the country improves. Chatham, which has been afflicted by a ‘wen,’ brings recollections of his days as a young soldier:

After you leave Dartford the land becomes excellent. You come to a bottom of chalk, many feet from the surface, and when that is the case the land is sure to be good; no *wet* at bottom, no



deep ditches, no water furrows, necessary; sufficiently moist in dry weather, and no water lying about upon it in wet weather for any length of time. The chalk acts as a filtering-stone, not as a sieve, like gravel, and not as a dish, like clay. The chalk acts as the soft stone in Herefordshire does; but it is not so congenial to trees that have tap-roots.—Along through Gravesend towards Rochester the country presents a sort of gardening scene. Rochester is a small but crowded place, lying on the south bank of the beautiful Medway, with a rising ground on the other side of the city. *Stroud*, which you pass through before you come to the bridge, over which you go to enter Rochester; *Rochester* itself, and *Chatham*, form, in fact, one main street of about two miles and a half in length.—Here I was got into the scenes of my cap-and-feather days! Here, at between sixteen and seventeen, I enlisted for a soldier. Upon looking up towards the fortifications and the barracks, how many recollections crowded into my mind! The girls in these towns do not seem to be *so pretty* as they were thirty-eight years ago; or am I not so quick in discovering beauties as I was then? Have thirty-eight years corrected my taste, or made me a hypercritic in these matters? Is it that I now look at them with the solemnness of a “professional man,” and not with the enthusiasm and eagerness of an “amateur?” I leave these questions for philosophers to solve. One thing I will say for the young women of these towns, and that is, that I always found those of them that I had the great happiness to be acquainted with, evince a sincere desire to do their best to smooth the inequalities of life, and to give us, “brave fellows,” as often as they could, strong beer, when their churlish masters or fathers or husbands would have drenched us to death with small. This, at the out-set of life, gave me a high opinion of the judgment and justice of the female sex; an opinion which has been confirmed by the observations of my whole life.—This Chatham has had some monstrous *wens* stuck on to it by the lavish expenditure of the war. These will moulder away. It is curious enough that I should meet with a gentleman in an inn at Chatham to give me a picture of the house-distress in that enormous wen, which, during the war, was stuck on to Portsmouth. Not less than fifty thousand people had been drawn together there! These are now dispersing. The coagulated blood is diluting and flowing back through the veins. Whole streets are deserted, and the eyes of



the houses knocked out by the boys that remain. The jack-daws, as much as to say, "Our turn to be inspired and to teach is come," are beginning to take possession of the Methodist chapels. The gentleman told me, that he had been down to Portsea to sell half a street of houses, left him by a relation; and that nobody would give him anything for them further than as very cheap fuel and rubbish!

For twenty years, Cobbett declares, he has been attacking these "unnatural embossments." The chief problem will be the dispersion of the greatest wen of all—London. Yet he insists that the restoration of happiness and decent living depends upon it.

Though not greatly charmed by the scenery of this part of Kent, Cobbett has much praise for the quality of its soil:

*Wednesday, 5 Dec.*

The land on quitting Chatham is chalk at bottom; but, before you reach Sittingbourne, there is a vein of gravel and sand under, but a great depth of loam above. Above Sittingbourne the chalk bottom comes again, and continues on to this place, where the land appears to me to be as good as it can possibly be. Mr William Waller, at whose house I am, has grown, this year, mangel-wurzel, the roots of which weigh, I think, on an average, twelve pounds, and in rows, too, at only about thirty inches distant from each other. In short, as far as *soil* goes, it is impossible to see a finer country than this. You frequently see a field of fifty acres, level as a die, clean as a garden and as rich. Mr *Birkbeck* need not have crossed the Atlantic, and Alleghany into the bargain, to look for land *too rich to bear wheat*; for here is a plenty of it. In short, this is a country of hop-gardens, cherry, apple, pear and filbert orchards, and quickset hedges. But, alas! what, in point of *beauty*, is a country without woods and lofty trees! And here there are very few indeed. I am now sitting in a room, from the window of which I look, *first*, over a large and level field of rich land, in which the drilled wheat is finely come up, and which is surrounded by clipped quickset hedges with a row of apple trees running by the sides of them; *next*, over a long succession of rich meadows, which are here called marshes, the shortest grass upon which will fatten sheep or oxen; *next*, over a little branch of the salt water which runs up to

Faversham; *beyond that*, on the Isle of Sheptry (or Shepway), which rises a little into a sort of ridge that runs along it; rich fields, pastures and orchards lie all around me; and yet, I declare, that I a million times to one prefer, as a spot to *live on*, the heaths, the miry coppices, the wild woods and the forests of Sussex and Hampshire.

Then follows a discussion on agricultural distress in Kent and some of its causes. Farmers, though generally thoughtful and sensible men, are "perverted" by the newspapers; rents are excessive, puffed up as a result of the huge sums that have poured into the country as part of the national expenditure on war. Yet the farmers are skilful and intelligent and the orchards produce fruit of high quality.

The *fruit* in Kent is more *select* than in Herefordshire, where it is raised for *cyder*, while, in Kent, it is raised for sale in its fruit state, a great deal being sent to the *Wen*, and a great deal sent to the North of England and to Scotland. The orchards are beautiful indeed. Kept in the neatest order, and indeed, all belonging to them excels anything of the kind to be seen in Normandy; and, as to apples, I never saw any so good in France as those of Kent.

### III

#### *A Ride through Norfolk and Suffolk*

Two days after his return from Kent, Cobbett sets out, on December 10, to spend the next fortnight in East Anglia. There are no signs of wens to cloud his enjoyment of the tour. After leaving Essex he finds good farmlands and the only drawbacks to this part of the country seem to be the general flatness and the almost total lack of woodland.

BERGH APTON, NEAR NORWICH,  
*Monday, 10 Dec. 1821*

From the *Wen* to Norwich, from which I am now distant seven miles, there is nothing in Essex, Suffolk, or this county, that can be called a *hill*. Essex, when you get beyond the immediate influence of the gorgings and disgorgings of the Wen; that is to say, beyond the demand for crude vegetables and repayment in manure, is by no means a fertile county. There appears generally to be a bottom of *clay*; not *soft chalk*, which they persist in calling clay in Norfolk. I wish I had one of these Norfolk men in a coppice in Hampshire or Sussex, and I would show him what *clay* is. Clay is what pots and pans and jugs and tiles are made of; and not soft, whitish stuff that crumbles to pieces in the sun, instead of baking as hard as a stone, and which, in dry weather, is to be broken to pieces by nothing short of a sledge-hammer. The narrow ridges on which the wheat is sown; the water furrows; the water standing in the dips of the pastures; the rusty iron-like colour of the water coming out of some of the banks; the deep ditches; the rusty look of the pastures; all show that here is a bottom of clay. Yet there is gravel too; for the oaks do not grow well. It was not till I got nearly to Sudbury that I saw much change for the better. Here the bottom of chalk, the soft dirty-looking chalk that the Norfolk people call clay, begins to be the bottom, and this, with very little exception (as far as I have been), is the bottom of all the lands of these two fine counties of Suffolk and Norfolk.—Sudbury has some fine meadows near it on the sides of the river Stour. The land all along to Bury Saint Edmund's is very fine; but no trees worth looking at. *Bury*,

formerly the seat of an abbot, the last of whom was, I think, hanged, or somehow put to death, by that matchless tyrant, Henry VIII is a very pretty place; extremely clean and neat; no ragged or dirty people to be seen, and women (*young* ones I mean) very pretty and very neatly dressed.—On this side of Bury, a considerable distance lower, I saw a field of *rape*, transplanted very thick, for, I suppose, sheep feed in the spring. The farming all along to Norwich is very good. The land clean, and everything done in a masterly manner.

The experiences of his host, Mr Clarke, are recorded to prove the advantages to be gained from transplanting, particularly in wide rows, with “inter tillage” between the rows. Passing the birthplace of Anne Boleyn, Cobbett regales us with a violent outburst against Anne herself, Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, and Cranmer, “this perfidious hypocrite”!

There are some oak woods between Norwich and Holt, “but very poor. Not like those, not near like the worst of those in Hampshire and Herefordshire. All this eastern coast seems very unpropitious to trees of all sorts.” Cobbett visits a pleasant estate near Holt:

*Friday, 14 Dec.*

Went to see the estate of Mr Hardy at Leveringsett, a hamlet about two miles from Holt. This is the first time that I have seen a *valley* in this part of England. From Holt you look, to the distance of seven or eight miles, over a very fine valley, leaving a great deal of inferior hill and dell within its boundaries. At the bottom of this general valley, Mr Hardy has a very beautiful estate of about four hundred acres. His house is at one end of it near the high road, where he has a malt-house and a brewery, the neat and ingenious manner of managing which I would detail if my total unacquaintance with machinery did not disqualify me for the task. His estate forms a valley of itself, somewhat longer than broad. The tops, and the sides of the tops of the hills round it, and also several little hillocks in the valley itself, are judiciously planted with trees of various sorts, leaving good wide roads, so that it is easy to ride round them in a carriage. The fields, the fences, the yards, the stacks, the buildings, the cattle, all showed the greatest judgment and industry. There was really nothing that the most critical observer could say was *out of order*.

However, the forest trees do not grow well here. The oaks are mere scrubs, as they are about Brentwood in Essex, and in some parts of Cornwall; and, for some unaccountable reason, people seldom plant the *ash*, which no wind will *shave*, as it does the oak.

He spends an evening in the market-room at Holt with the farmers of the district with whom he discusses the causes of low prices. On the way to Great Yarmouth he is pleased to find an expression of affection for George IV's unfortunate wife, Queen Caroline. He has a good reception in the village that was the birthplace of the Rev. Richard Baker, Rector of Botley, with whose political sermons Cobbett had been in violent disagreement.

BERGH APTON,  
Sunday, 16 Dec.

Came from Holt through Saxthorpe and Cawston. At the former village were on one end of a decent white house, these words, "*Queen Caroline; for her Britons mourn,*" and a crown over all in black. I need not have looked to see: I might have been sure, that the owner of the house was a *shoe-maker*, a trade which numbers more men of sense and of public spirit than any other in the kingdom.—At Cawston we stopped at a public house, the keeper of which had taken and read the Register for years. I shall not attempt to describe the pleasure I felt at the hearty welcome given us by Mr Pern and his wife and by a young miller of the village, who, having learnt at Holt that we were to return that way, had come to meet us, the house being on the side of the great road, from which the village is at some distance. This is the birthplace of the famous *Botley Parson*, all the history of whom we now learned, and if we could have gone to the village, they were prepared to *ring the bells*, and show us the old woman who nursed the *Botley Parson*! These Norfolk *baws* never do things by halves. We came away, very much pleased with our reception at Cawston, and with a promise, on my part, that, if I visited the county again, I would write a Register there; a promise which I shall certainly keep.

He finds Beccles a "very pretty place" that "has watered meadows near it, and is situated amid fine lands." He enjoys his stay in Great Yarmouth:

We slept at the house of a friend of Mr Clarke on our way, and got to this very fine town of Great Yarmouth yesterday about noon. A party of friends met us and conducted us about the town, which is a very beautiful one indeed. What I liked best, however, was the hearty welcome that I met with, because it showed that the reign of calumny and delusion was passed. A company of gentlemen gave me a dinner in the evening, and in all my life I never saw a set of men more worthy of my respect and gratitude. Sensible, modest, understanding the whole of our case, and clearly foreseeing what is about to happen.

I leave Great Yarmouth with sentiments of the sincerest regard for all those whom I there saw and conversed with, and with my best wishes for the happiness of all its inhabitants; nay, even the *parsons* not excepted; for, if they did not come to welcome me, they collected in a group to *see* me, and that was one step towards doing justice to him whom their order have so much, so foully, and, if they knew their own interest, so foolishly slandered.

Cobbett arrives in Norwich on December 22 to attend the Radical Reform Dinner at the Swan Inn. He likes the city:

Norwich is a very fine city, and the castle, which stands in the middle of it, on a hill, is truly majestic. The meat and poultry and vegetable market is beautiful. It is kept in a large open square in the middle, or nearly so, of the city. The ground is a pretty sharp slope, so that you see all at once. It resembles one of the French markets, only *there* the vendors are all standing and gabbling like parrots, and the meat is lean and bloody and nasty, and the people snuffy and grimy in hands and face, the contrary, precisely the contrary of all which is the case in this beautiful market at Norwich, where the women have a sort of uniform brown great coats, with white aprons and *bibs* (I think they call them) going from the apron up to the bosom. They equal in neatness (for nothing can surpass) the market women in Philadelphia.—The cattle-market is held on the hill by the castle, and many *fairs* are smaller in bulk of stock. The corn-market is held in a very magnificent place, called Saint Andrew's Hall, which will contain two or three thousand persons.



His only regret is "the total want of power to make those hearty Norfolk and Norwich friends any suitable return, whether by act or word." His Journal for the ride concludes, on Christmas Eve:

KENSINGTON,

Monday, 24 Dec.

Went from Bergh Apton to Norwich in the morning, and from Norwich to London during the day, carrying with me great admiration of and respect for this county of *excellent farmers*, and hearty, open and spirited men. The Norfolk people are quick and smart in their motions and in their speaking. Very neat and *trim* in all their farming concerns, and very skilful. Their land is good, their roads are level, and the bottom of their soil is dry, to be sure; and these are great advantages; but they are diligent, and make the most of everything. Their management of all sorts of stock is most judicious; they are careful about manure; their teams move quickly; and, in short, it is a county of most excellent cultivators.—The churches in Norfolk are generally large and the towers lofty. They have all been well built at first. Many of them are of the Saxon architecture. They are, almost all (I do not remember an exception), placed on the *highest* spots to be found near where they stand; and, it is curious enough, that the contrary practice should have prevailed in *hilly* countries, where they are generally found in valleys and in low, sheltered dells, even in those valleys! These churches prove that the people of Norfolk and Suffolk were always a superior people in point of wealth, while the size of them proves that the country parts were, at one time, a great deal more populous than they now are. The great drawbacks on the beauty of these counties are, their flatness and their want of fine woods; but to those who can dispense with these, Norfolk, under a wise and just government, can have nothing to ask more than Providence and the industry of man have given.

#### IV

#### *A Ride to Battle, through Bromley, Sevenoaks, and Tonbridge (Wednesday, January 2, 1822 to Friday, January 4)*

THIS is a brief excursion with a limited object in view—attendance at a meeting in Battle of the “gentry, clergy, freeholders, and occupiers of land in the Rape of Hastings.” Cobbett speaks at the meeting for, since his health is proposed, he feels it would look like “mock-modesty, which is, in fact, only another term for hypocrisy,” to refrain from giving his opinion. The gist of his remarks is the uselessness of Corn Bills as a remedy for agricultural depression. “A law to prohibit or check the importation of human food is a perfect novelty in our history.” Though no corn has been imported since 1819, yet prices have continued to fall. The real cause of the depression, he argues, is inflation due to the “boundless issue of paper money.”

His Journal contains some observations on the country through which he passes. Between the ‘Great Wen’ and Bromley it is “very ugly.” Throughout there is a great variety of sub-soil. He finds “a most beautiful and rich valley” before he comes to Sevenoaks, which he considers “a very fine place.” “Tonbridge is a small but very nice town, and has some fine meadows and a navigable river.” The cutting of hop-poles from the coppices is an important rural industry in these parts and Cobbett describes the woodmen and their work :

The agricultural state of the country, or, rather, the quality of the land, from Bromley to Battle, may be judged of from the fact, that I did not see, as I came along, more than thirty acres of swedes during the fifty-six miles! In Norfolk I should, in the same distance, have seen five hundred acres! However, man was not the maker of the land; and, as to human happiness, I am of opinion that as much, and even more, falls to the lot of the leather-legged chaps that live in and rove about amongst those clays and woods as to the more regularly disciplined labourers of the rich and prime parts of England. As “God has made the back to the burthen,” so the clay and coppice people make the dress to the

stubs and bushes. Under the sole of the shoe is *iron*; from the sole six inches upwards is a high-low; then comes a leather bam to the knee; then comes a pair of leather breeches; then comes a stout doublet; over this comes a smock-frock; and the wearer sets brush and stubs and thorns and mire at defiance. I have always observed that woodland and forest labourers are best off in the main. The coppices give them pleasant and profitable work in winter. If they have not so great a corn-harvest, they have a three weeks' harvest in April or May; that is to say, in the season of barking, which in Hampshire is called *stripping*, and in Sussex *flaying*, which employs women and children as well as men. And then in the great article of *fuel*! They *buy* none. It is miserable work where this is to be bought, and where, as at Salisbury, the poor take by turns the making of fires at their houses to boil four or five tea-kettles. What a winter-life must those lead, whose turn it is not to make the fire! At Launceston in Cornwall a man, a tradesman too, told me, that the people in general could not afford to have fire in ordinary, and that he himself paid 3*d.* for boiling a leg of mutton at another man's fire! The leather-legged-race know none of these miseries, at any rate. They literally get their fuel "by *hook* or by *crook*," whence, doubtless, comes that old and very expressive saying, which is applied to those cases where people *will have a thing* by one means or another.

I cannot quit Battle without observing that the country is very pretty all about it. All hill or valley. A great deal of woodland, in which the underwood is generally very fine, though the oaks are not very fine, and a good deal covered with *moss*. This shows that the clay ends before the *tap*-root of the oak gets as deep as it would go; for when the clay goes the full depth the oaks are always fine.—The woods are too large and too near each other for hare-hunting; and as to coursing it is out of the question here. But it is a fine country for shooting and for harbouring game of all sorts.—It was rainy as I came home; but the woodmen were at work. A great many *hop-poles* are cut here, which makes the coppices more valuable than in many other parts. The women work in the coppices, shaving the bark of the hop-poles, and, indeed, at various other parts of the business. These poles are shaved to prevent *maggots* from breeding in the bark and accelerating the destruction of the pole. It is curious that the bark of

# Rural Rides \* 4, 5, & 7



trees should generate maggots ; but it has, as well as the wood, a *sugary* matter in it. The hickory wood in America sends out from the ends of the logs when these are burning great quantities of the finest syrup that can be imagined. Accordingly, that wood breeds maggots, or worms as they are usually called, surprisingly. Our *ash* breeds worms very much. When the tree or pole is cut, the moist matter between the outer bark and the wood, putrifies. Thence come the maggots, which soon begin to eat their way into the wood. For this reason the bark is shaved off the hop-poles, as it ought to be off all our timber trees, as soon as cut, especially the ash.—Little boys and girls shave hop-poles and assist in other coppice work very nicely. And it is pleasant work when the weather is dry over head. The woods, bedded with leaves as they are, are clean and dry underfoot. They are warm too, even in the coldest weather. When the ground is frozen several inches deep in the open fields, it is scarcely frozen at all in a coppice where the underwood is a good plant, and where it is nearly high enough to cut. So that the woodman's is really a pleasant life. We are apt to think that the birds have a hard time of it in winter. But we forget the warmth of the woods which far exceeds anything to be found in farmyards.

Woodland countries are interesting on many accounts. Not so much on account of their masses of green leaves, as on account of the variety of sights and sounds and incidents that they afford. Even in winter the coppices are beautiful to the eye, while they comfort the mind with the idea of shelter and warmth. In spring they change their hue from day to day during two whole months, which is about the time from the first appearance of the delicate leaves of the birch to the full expansion of those of the ash ; and even before the leaves come at all to intercept the view, what in the vegetable creation is so delightful to behold as the bed of a coppice bespangled with primroses and bluebells ? The opening of the birch leaves is the signal for the pheasant to begin to crow, for the blackbird to whistle, and the thrust to sing ; and just when the oak-buds begin to look reddish, and not a day before, the whole tribe of finches burst forth in songs from every bough, while the lark, imitating them all, carries the joyous sounds to the sky. These are amongst the means which Providence has benignantly appointed to sweeten the toils by which food and raiment are produced ; these the English Ploughman could once



hear without the sorrowful reflection that he himself was *a pauper*, and that the bounties of nature had, for him, been scattered in vain! And shall he never see an end to this state of things! Shall he never have the due reward of his labour! Shall unsparing taxation never cease to make him a miserable dejected being, a creature famishing in the midst of abundance, fainting, expiring with hunger's feeble moans, surrounded by a carolling creation! O! accursed paper-money! Has hell a torment surpassing the wickedness of thy inventor!

## V

### *A Ride through Croydon, Godstone, East Grinstead, and Uckfield, to Lewes and Brighton; returning by Cuckfield, Worth, and Redhill*

THE main object of this ride, which occupies four days, is to attend a meeting at Lewes of the owners and occupiers of land "in the rapes of Lewes and Pevensey." Starting out on Thursday, January 8, 1822, Cobbett is appalled at the growth of houses between London and Croydon—"What an at once horrible and ridiculous thing this country would become, if this thing should go on for a few years." The country through which he rides is varied in quality:

From London to Croydon is as ugly a bit of country as any in England. A poor spewy gravel with some clay. Few trees but elms, and those generally stripped up and villainously ugly.—Croydon is a good market-town; but is, by the funds, swelled out into a *Wen*.—Upon quitting Croydon for Godstone, you come to the chalk hills, the juniper shrubs and the yew trees. This is an extension westward of the vein of chalk which I have before noticed between Bromley and Seven-Oaks. To the westward here lies Epsom Downs, which lead on to Merrow Downs and St Margaret's Hill, then, skipping over Guildford, you come to the Hog's Back, which is still of chalk, and at the west end of which lies Farnham. With the Hog's Back this vein of chalk seems to end; for then the valleys become rich loam, and the hills sand and gravel till you approach the Winchester Downs by the way of Arlesford.—Godstone, which is in Surrey also, is a beautiful village, chiefly of one street with a fine large green before it and with a pond in the green. A little way to the right (going from London) lies the vile rotten Borough of *Blechingley*; but, happily for Godstone, out of sight. At and near Godstone the gardens are all very neat; and, at the inn, there is a nice garden well stocked with beautiful flowers in the season. I here saw, last summer, some double violets as large as small pinks, and the lady of the house was kind enough to give me some of the roots.—

From Godstone you go up a long hill of clay and sand, and then descend into a level country of stiff loam at top, clay at bottom, corn-fields, pastures, broad hedge-rows, coppices, and oak woods, which country continues till you quit Surrey about two miles before you reach East-Grinstead. The woods and coppices are very fine here. It is the genuine *oak-soil*; a bottom of yellow clay to any depth, I dare say, that man can go. No moss on the oaks. No dead tops. Straight as larches. The bark of the young trees with dark spots in it; sure sign of free growth and great depth of clay beneath. The wheat is here sown on five-turn ridges, and the ploughing is amongst the best that I ever saw.—At East-Grinstead, which is a rotten borough and a very shabby place, you come to stiff loam at top with sand-stone beneath. To the south of the place the land is fine, and the vale on both sides a very beautiful intermixture of woodland and corn-fields and pastures.—At about three miles from Grinstead you come to a pretty village, called Forest-Row, and then, on the road to Uckfield, you cross Ashurst Forest, which is a heath, with here and there a few birch scrubs upon it, verily the most villainously ugly spot I ever saw in England. This lasts you for five miles, getting, if possible, uglier and uglier all the way, till, at last, as if barren soil, nasty spewy gravel, heath and even that stunted, were not enough, you see some rising spots, which instead of trees, present you with black, ragged, hideous rocks. There may be Englishmen who wish to see the coast of *Nova Scotia*. They need not go to sea; for here it is to the life. If I had been in a long trance and had been waked up here, I should have begun to look about for the Indians and the squaws, and to have heaved a sigh at the thought of being so far from England.—From the end of this forest without trees you come into a country of but poorish wettish land. Passing through the village of Uckfield, you find an enclosed country, with a soil of a clay cast all the way to within about three miles of Lewes, when you get to a chalk bottom, and rich land. I was at Lewes at the beginning of last harvest, and saw the fine farms of the Ellmans, very justly renowned for their improvement of the breed of *South-Down sheep*.

The meeting and the dinner have the real Cobbett atmosphere—at one point there is a proposition before the assembly that he should be put out of the room! “A considerable hubbub took

place," but he makes his speech. The Journal entry for Thursday describes Lewes and Brighton:

BRIGHTON,

Thursday, 10 Jan. 1822

Lewes is in a valley of the *South Downs*, this town is at eight miles distance, to the south-south-west or thereabouts. There is a great extent of rich meadows above and below Lewes. The town itself is a model of solidity and neatness. The buildings all substantial to the very outskirts; the pavements good and complete; the shops nice and clean; the people well-dressed; and, though last not least, the girls remarkably pretty, as, indeed, they are in most parts of Sussex; round faces, features small, little hands and wrists, plump arms, and bright eyes. The Sussex men, too, are remarkable for their good looks. A Mr Baxter, a stationer at Lewes, showed me a *farmer's account book*, which is a very complete thing of the kind. The inns are good at Lewes, the people civil and not servile, and the charges really (considering the taxes) far below what one could reasonably expect.—From Lewes to Brighton the road winds along between the hills of the South Downs, which, in this mild weather, are mostly beautifully green even at this season, with flocks of sheep feeding on them.—Brighton itself lies in a valley cut across at one end by the sea, and its extension, or *Wen*, has swelled up the sides of the hills and has run some distance up the valley.—The first thing you see in approaching Brighton from Lewes, is a splendid *horse-barrack* on one side of the road, and a heap of low, shabby, nasty houses, irregularly built, on the other side. This is always the case where there is a barrack. How soon a reformed parliament would make both disappear! Brighton is a very pleasant place. For a *wen* remarkably so. The *Kremlin*,<sup>1</sup> the very name of which has so long been a subject of laughter all over the country, lies in the gorge of the valley, and amongst the old houses of the town. The grounds, which cannot, I think, exceed a couple or three acres, are surrounded by a wall neither lofty nor good-looking. Above this rise some trees, bad in sorts, stunted in growth, and dirty with smoke. As to the "palace" as the Brighton newspapers call it, the apartments appear to be all upon the ground floor; and, when you see the thing from a

<sup>1</sup> The Brighton Pavilion.

distance, you think you see a parcel of *cradle-spits*, of various dimensions, sticking up out of the mouths of so many enormous squat decanters. Take a square box, the sides of which are three feet and a half, and the height a foot and a half. Take a large Norfolk-turnip, cut off the green of the leaves, leave the stalks 9 inches long, tie these round with a string three inches from the top, and put the turnip on the middle of the top of the box. Then take four turnips of half the size, treat them in the same way, and put them on the corners of the box. Then take a considerable number of bulbs of the crown-imperial, the narcissus, the hyacinth, the tulip, the crocus, and others; let the leaves of each have sprouted to about an inch, more or less according to the size of the bulb; put all these, pretty promiscuously, but pretty thickly, on the top of the box. Then stand off and look at your architecture. There! That's "*a Kremlin!*" Only you must cut some church-looking windows in the sides of the box. As to what you ought to put *into* the box, that is a subject far above my cut.—Brighton is naturally a place of resort for *expectants*, and a shifty ugly-looking swarm is, of course, assembled here. Some of the fellows, who had endeavoured to disturb our harmony at the dinner at Lewes, were parading, amongst this swarm, on the cliff. You may always know them by their lank jaws, the stiffeners round their necks, their hidden or *no* shirts, their stays, their false shoulders, hips and haunches, their half-whiskers, and by their skins, colour of veal kidney-suet, warmed a little, and then powdered with dirty dust.—These vermin excepted, the people at Brighton make a very fine figure. The trades-people are very nice in all their concerns. The houses are excellent, built chiefly with a blue or purple brick; and bow-windows appear to be the general taste. I can easily believe this to be a very healthy place: the open downs on the one side and the open sea on the other. No inlet, cove, or river; and, of course, no swamps.



## VI

### *A Ride through Ware and Royston to Huntingdon*

THIS is a ride occupying three days, January 20–22, 1822. The Journal shows keen observation of the land and gives typical Cobbett views on tree-planting:

ROYSTON,

*'Monday morning, 21st Jan. 1822*

Came from London, yesterday noon, to this town on my way to Huntingdon. My road was through Ware. Royston is just within the line (on the Cambridgeshire side), which divides Hertfordshire from Cambridgeshire. On this road, as on almost all the others going from it, the enormous *Wen* has swelled out to the distance of about six or seven miles.—The land till you come nearly to Ware which is in Hertfordshire, and which is twenty-three miles from the *Wen*, is chiefly a strong and deep loam, with the gravel a good distance from the surface. The land is good wheat-land; but I observed only three fields of swedish turnips in the 23 miles, and no wheat drilled. The wheat is sown on ridges of great width here and there; sometimes on ridges of ten, at others on ridges of seven, on those of five, four, three, and even two, feet wide. Yet the bottom is manifestly not very wet generally; and that there is not a bottom of clay is clear from the poor growth of the oak trees. All the trees are shabby in this country; and the eye is incessantly offended by the sight of *pollards*, which are seldom suffered to disgrace even the meanest lands in Hampshire or Sussex. As you approach Ware the bottom becomes chalk of a dirtyish colour, and, in some parts, far below the surface. After you quit Ware, which is a mere market town, the land grows by degrees poorer; the chalk lies nearer and nearer to the surface, till you come to the open common-fields within a few miles of Royston. Along here the land is poor enough. It is not the stiff red loam mixed with large blue-grey flints, lying upon the chalk, such as you see in the north of Hampshire; but a whitish sort of clay, with little yellow flattish stones amongst it; sure

signs of a hungry soil. Yet this land bears wheat sometimes.—Royston is at the foot of this high poor land; or rather in a dell, the open side of which looks towards the North. It is a common market town. Not mean, but having nothing of beauty about it; and having on it, on three of the sides out of the four, those very ugly things, common-fields, which have all the nakedness, without any of the smoothness, of Downs.

## HUNTINGDON,

*Tuesday morning, 22 Jan. 1822*

Immediately upon quitting Royston, you come along, for a considerable distance, with enclosed fields on the left and open common-fields on the right. Here the land is excellent. A dark, rich loam, free from stones, on chalk beneath at a great distance. The land appears, for a mile or two, to resemble that at and near Faversham in Kent, which I have before noticed. The fields on the left seem to have been enclosed by act of parliament; and they certainly are the most beautiful tract of *fields* that I ever saw. Their extent may be from ten to thirty acres each. Divided by quick-set hedges, exceedingly well planted and raised. The whole tract is nearly a perfect level. The cultivation neat, and the stubble heaps, such as remain out, giving proof of great crops of straw, while, on land with a chalk bottom, there is seldom any want of a proportionate quantity of grain. Even here, however, I saw but few swedish turnips, and those not good. Nor did I see any wheat drilled; and observed, that, in many parts, the broad-cast sowing had been performed in a most careless manner, especially at about three miles from Royston, where some parts of the broad lands seemed to have had the seed flung along them with a shovel, while other parts contained only here and there a blade; or, at least, were so thinly supplied as to make it almost doubtful whether they had not been wholly missed. In some parts, the middles only of the ridges were sown thickly. This is shocking husbandry. A Norfolk or a Kentish farmer would have sowed a bushel and a half of seed to the acre here, and would have had a far better plant of wheat.—About four miles, I think it is, from Royston you come to the estate of Lord Hardwicke. You see the house at the end of an avenue about two miles long, which,

however, wants the main thing, namely, fine and lofty trees. The soil here begins to be a very stiff loam at top; clay beneath for a considerable distance; and, in some places, beds of yellow gravel with very large stones mixed in it. The land is generally cold; a great deal of draining is wanted; and yet, the bottom is such as not to be favourable to the growth of the *oak*, of which sort I have not seen one *handsome* tree since I left London. A grove, such as I saw at Weston in Herefordshire, would, here, be a thing to attract the attention of all ranks and all ages. What, then, would they say, on beholding a wood of oaks, hickories, chestnuts, walnuts, locusts, gum-trees, and maples in America! —Lord Hardwicke's avenue appears to be lined with elms chiefly. They are shabby. He might have had *ash*; for the ash will grow *anywhere*; on sand, on gravel, on clay, on chalk, or in swamps. It is surprising that those who planted these rows of trees did not observe how well the ash grows here! In the hedge-rows, in the plantations, everywhere the ash is fine. The ash is the *hardiest* of all our large trees. Look at trees on any part of the sea coast. You will see them all, even the firs, lean from the sea breeze, except the ash. You will see the oak *shaved up* on the side of the breeze. But the ash stands upright, as if in a warm woody dell. We have no tree that attains a greater height than the ash; and certainly none that equals it in beauty of leaf. It bears pruning better than any other tree. Its timber is one of the most useful; and as underwood and fire-wood it far exceeds all others of English growth. From the trees of an avenue like that of Lord Hardwicke a hundred pounds' worth of fuel might, if the trees were ash, be cut every year in prunings necessary to preserve the health and beauty of the trees. Yet, on this same land, has his lordship planted many acres of larches and firs. These appear to have been planted about twelve years. If instead of these he had planted ash, four years from the seed bed and once removed; had cut them down within an inch of the ground the second year after planting; and had planted them at four feet apart, he would now have had about six thousand ash-poles, on an average twelve feet long, on each acre of land in his plantation; which, at three-halfpence each, would have been worth somewhere nearly forty pounds an acre. He might now have cut the poles, leaving about 600 to stand upon an acre to come to trees; and, while these were growing to

timber, the underwood would, for poles, hoops, broomsticks, spars, rods, and faggots, have been worth twenty-five or thirty pounds an acre every ten years. Can beggarly stuff, like larches and firs, ever be profitable to this extent? Ash is timber, fit for the wheelwright, at the age of twenty years, or less. What can you do with a rotten fir thing at that age?—This estate of Lord Hardwicke appears to be very large. There is a part which is, apparently, in his own hands, as, indeed, the whole must soon be, unless he give up all idea of rent, or unless he can *choack off* the fundholder or get again afloat on the sea of paper-money. In this part of his land there is a fine piece of *Lucerne* in rows at about eighteen inches distant from each other. They are now manuring it with *burnt-earth* mixed with some dung; and I see several heaps of burnt-earth hereabouts. The directions for doing this are contained in my *Year's Residence*, as taught me by Mr William Gauntlet, of Winchester.—The land is, all along here, laid up in those wide and high ridges, which I saw in Gloucestershire, going from Gloucester to Oxford, as I have already mentioned. These ridges are ploughed *back* or *down*; but they are ploughed up again for every sowing.—At an inn near Lord Hardwicke's I saw the finest parcel of dove-house pigeons I ever saw in my life.—Between this place and Huntingdon is the village of Caxton, which very much resembles almost a village of the same size in *Picardy*, where I saw the women dragging harrows to harrow in the corn. Certainly this village resembles nothing English, except some of the rascally rotten boroughs in Cornwall and Devonshire, on which a just Providence seems to have entailed its curse. The land just about here does seem to be really bad. The face of the country is naked. The few scrubbed trees that now and then meet the eye, and even the quick-sets, are covered with a yellow moss. All is bleak and comfortless; and, just on the most dreary part of this most dreary scene, stands almost opportunely, "*Caxton Gibbet*," tendering its friendly one arm to the passers-by. It has recently been fresh-painted, and written on in conspicuous characters, for the benefit, I suppose, of those who cannot exist under the thought of wheat at four shillings a bushel.—Not far from this is a new house, which, the coachman says, belongs to a Mr Cheer, who, if report speaks truly, is not, however, notwithstanding his name, guilty of the sin of making people either

drunkards or gluttons. Certainly the spot, on which he has built his house, is one of the most ugly that I ever saw. Few spots have everything that you could wish to find; but this, according to my judgment, has everything that every man of ordinary taste would wish to avoid.—The country changes but little till you get quite to Huntingdon. The land is generally quite open, or in large fields. Strong wheat-land, that wants a good deal of draining. Very few turnips of any sort are raised; and, of course, few sheep and cattle kept. Few trees, and those scrubbed. Few woods, and those small. Few hills, and those hardly worthy of the name. All which, when we see them, make us cease to wonder, that this country is so famous for *fox-hunting*. Such it has doubtless been, in all times, and to this circumstance Huntingdon, that is to say, Huntingdon, or Huntingdown, unquestionably owes its name; because *down* does not mean *unploughed* land, but open and *unsheltered* land, and the Saxon word is *dun*.—When you come down near to the town itself, the scene suddenly, totally, and most agreeably, changes. The *River Ouse* separates Godmanchester from Huntingdon, and there is, I think, no very great difference in the population of the two. Both together do not make up a population of more than about five thousand souls. Huntingdon is a slightly built town, compared with Lewes, for instance. The houses are not in general so high, nor made of such solid and costly materials. The shops are not so large and their contents not so costly. There is not a show of so much business and so much opulence. But Huntingdon is a very clean and nice place, contains many elegant houses, and the environs are beautiful. Above and below the bridge, under which the Ouse passes, are the most beautiful, and by far the most beautiful, meadows that I ever saw in my life. The meadows at Lewes, at Guildford, at Farnham, at Winchester, at Salisbury, at Exeter, at Gloucester, at Hereford, and even at Canterbury, are nothing, compared with those of Huntingdon in point of beauty. Here are no reeds, here is no sedge, no unevennesses of any sort. Here are *bowling-greens* of hundreds of acres in extent, with a river winding through them, full to the brink. One of these meadows is the *race-course*; and so pretty a spot, so level, so smooth, so green, and of such an extent I never saw, and never expected to see. From the bridge you look across the valleys,



first to the west and then to the east; the valleys terminate at the foot of rising ground, well set with trees, from amongst which church spires raise their heads here and there. I think it would be very difficult to find a more delightful spot than this in the world. To my fancy (and every one to his taste) the prospect from this bridge far surpasses that from Richmond Hill.—All that I have yet seen of Huntingdon I like exceedingly. It is one of those pretty, clean, unstenched, unconfined places that tend to lengthen life and make it happy.

## VII

### *A Ride to St Albans, through Edgware, Stanmore, and Watford, returning by Redbourn, Hemel Hempstead, and Chesham*

THE summer of 1822 appears to have been a very good one for farmers. Cobbett undertakes this tour in the middle of hay-making time. There are one or two brief political outbursts, but on the whole the Journal is concerned with the country through which he passes during the six days from June 19:

SAINT ALBANS,

19 June, 1822

From Kensington to this place, through Edgware, Stanmore, and Watford, the crop is almost entirely hay, from fields of permanent grass, manured by dung and other matter brought from the *Wen*. Near the *Wen*, where they have had the *first haul* of the Irish and other perambulating labourers, the hay is all in rick. Some miles further down it is nearly all in. Towards Stanmore and Watford, a third, perhaps, of the grass remains to be cut. It is curious to see how the thing regulates itself. We saw, all the way down, squads of labourers, of different departments, migrating from tract to tract; leaving the cleared fields behind them and proceeding on towards the work to be yet performed; and then, as to the classes of labourers, the *mowers*, with their scythes on their shoulders, were in front, going on towards the standing crops, while the *hay-makers* were coming on behind towards the grass already cut or cutting. The weather is fair and warm; so that the public-houses on the road are pouring out their beer pretty fast, and are getting a good share of the wages of these thirsty souls.

It is curious to observe how the different labours are divided as to the *nations*. The mowers are all *English*; the haymakers all *Irish*. Scotchmen toil hard enough in Scotland; but when they go from home it is not to *work*, if you please. They are found in gardens, and especially in gentlemen's gardens. Tying up

flowers, picking dead leaves off exotics, peeping into melon-frames, publishing the banns of marriage between the "*male*" and "*female*" blossoms, tap-tap-tapping against a wall with a hammer that weighs half an ounce. They have backs as straight and shoulders as square as heroes of Waterloo; and who can blame them? The digging, the mowing, the carrying of loads; all the break-back and sweat-extracting work they leave to be performed by those who have less *prudence* than they have. The great purpose of human art, the great end of human study, is to obtain *ease*, to throw the burden of labour from our own shoulders, and fix it on those of others. The crop of hay is very large, and that part which is in, is in very good order.

This is, all along here, and especially as far as Stanmore, a very dull and ugly country: flat, and all grass-fields and elms. Few *birds* of any kind, and few *constant* labourers being wanted; scarcely any cottages and gardens, which form one of the great beauties of a country. Stanmore is on a hill; but it looks over a country of little variety, though rich. What a difference between the view here and those which carry the eye over the coppices, the corn-fields, the hop-gardens and the orchards of Kent! It is miserable land from Stanmore to Watford, where we get into Hertfordshire. Hence to Saint Albans there is generally chalk at bottom with a red tenacious loam at top, with flints, grey on the outside and dark blue within. Wherever this is the soil, the wheat grows well. The crops, and especially that of the barley, are very fine and very forward. The wheat, in general, does not appear to be a heavy crop; but the ears seem as if they would be full from bottom to top; and we have had so much heat, that the grain is pretty sure to be plump, let the weather, for the rest of the summer, be what it may. The produce depends more on the weather, previous to the coming out of the ear, than on the subsequent weather. In the northern parts of America, where they have, some years, not heat enough to bring the Indian corn to perfection, I have observed, that, if they have about fifteen days with the thermometer at *ninety*, before the ear makes its appearance, the crop never fails, though the weather may be ever so unfavourable afterwards. This allies with the old remark of the country people in England, that "*May makes or mars the wheat*;" for it is in May that the ear and the grains are *formed*.

KENSINGTON,

24 June, 1822

Set out at four this morning for Redbourn, and then turned off to the westward to go to High Wycombe, through Hempstead and Chesham. The *wheat* is good all the way. The barley and oats good enough till I came to Hempstead. But the land along here is very fine: a red tenacious flinty loam upon a bed of chalk at a yard or two beneath, which, in my opinion, is the very best *corn land* that we have in England. The fields here, like those in the rich parts of Devonshire, will bear perpetual grass. Any of them will become upland meadows. The land is, in short, excellent, and it is a real corn-country. The *trees* from Redbourn to Hempstead are very fine; oaks, ashes, and beeches. Some of the finest of each sort, and the very finest ashes I ever saw in my life. They are in great numbers, and make the fields look most beautiful. No villainous things of the *fir-tribe* offend the eye here. The custom is in this part of Hertfordshire (and I am told it continues into Bedfordshire) to leave a *border* round the ploughed part of the fields to bear grass and to make hay from, so that, the grass being now made into hay, every corn field has a closely mowed grass walk about ten feet wide all round it, between the corn and the hedge. This is most beautiful! The hedges are now full of the shepherd's rose, honeysuckles, and all sorts of wild flowers; so that you are upon a grass walk, with this most beautiful of all flower gardens and shrubberies on your one hand, and with the corn on the other. And thus you go from field to field (on foot or on horseback), the sort of corn, the sort of underwood and timber, the shape and size of the fields, the height of the hedge-rows, the height of the trees, all continually varying. Talk of *pleasure-grounds* indeed! What that man ever invented, under the name of pleasure-grounds, can equal these fields in Hertfordshire?—This is a profitable system too; for the ground under hedges bears little corn, and it bears very good grass. Something, however, depends on the nature of the soil: for it is not all land that will bear grass, fit for hay, perpetually; and, when the land will not do that, these headlands would only be a harbour for weeds and couch-grass, the seeds of which would fill the fields with their mischievous race.—Mr Tull has observed upon the great use of

headlands.—It is curious enough, that these headlands cease soon after you get into Buckinghamshire. At first you see now and then a field *without* a grass headland; then it comes to now and then a field *with* one; and, at the end of five or six miles, they wholly cease. Hempstead is a very pretty town, with beautiful environs, and there is a canal that comes near it, and that goes on to London. It lies at the foot of a hill. It is clean, substantially built, and a very pretty place altogether. Between Hempstead and Chesham the land is not so good. I came into Buckinghamshire before I got into the latter place. Passed over two commons. But still the land is not bad. It is drier; nearer the chalk, and not so red. The wheat continues good, though not heavy; but the barley, on the land that is not very good, is light, begins to look *blue*, and the backward oats are very short. On the still thinner lands the barley and oats must be a very short crop.—People do not sow *turnips*, the ground is so dry, and I should think that the *swede-crop* will be very short; for *swedes* ought to be *up* at least, by this time. If I had swedes to sow, I would sow them now, and upon ground very deeply and finely broken. I would sow directly after the plough, not being half an hour behind it, and would roll the ground as hard as possible. I am sure the plants would come up, even without rain. And the moment the rain came, they would grow famously.—Chesham is a nice little town, lying in a deep and narrow valley, with a stream of water running through it. All along the country that I have come, the labourers' dwellings are good. They are made of what they call *brick-nog*; that is to say, a frame of wood, and a single brick thick, filling up the vacancies between the timber. They are generally covered with tile. Not *pretty* by any means; but they are good; and you see here, as in Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire, and, indeed, in almost every part of England, that most interesting of all objects, that which is such an honour to England, and that which distinguishes it from all the rest of the world, namely, those *neatly kept and productive little gardens round the labourers' houses*, which are seldom unornamented with more or less of flowers.

The orchards all along this country are by no means bad. Not like those of Herefordshire and the north of Kent; but a great deal better than in many other parts of the kingdom.

The cherry-trees are pretty abundant and particularly good. There are not many of the *merries*, as they call them in Kent and Hampshire; that is to say, the little black cherry, the name of which is a corruption from the French *merise*, in the singular, and *merises* in the plural. I saw the little boys, in many places, set to keep the birds off the cherries, which reminded me of the time when I followed the same occupation, and also of the toll that I used to take in payment. The children are all along here, I mean the little children, locked out of the doors, while the fathers and mothers are at work in the fields. I saw many little groups of this sort; and this is one advantage of having plenty of room on the outside of a house. I never saw the country children better clad, or look cleaner and fatter than they look here, and I have the very great pleasure to add, that I do not think I saw three acres of *potatoes* in this whole tract of fine country, from St Albans to Redbourn, from Redbourn to Hempstead, and from Hempstead to Chesham. In all the houses where I have been, they use the roasted rye instead of coffee or tea, and I saw one gentleman who had sown a piece of rye (a grain not common in this part of the country) for the express purpose. It costs about three farthings a pound, roasted and ground into powder.—The pay of the labourers varies from eight to twelve shillings a week. Grass mowers get two shillings-day, two quarts of what they call strong beer, and as much small beer as they can drink. After quitting Chesham, I passed through a wood, resembling, as nearly as possible, the woods in the more cultivated parts of Long Island, with these exceptions, that there the woods consist of a great variety of trees, and of more beautiful foliage. Here there are only two sorts of trees, beech and oak: but the wood at bottom was precisely like an American wood: none of that stuff which we generally call underwood: the trees standing very thick in some places: the shade so complete as never to permit herbage below: no bushes of any sort; and nothing to impede your steps but little spindling trees here and there grown up from the seed. The trees here are as lofty, too, as they generally are in the Long Island woods, and as straight, except in cases where you find clumps of the tulip-tree, which sometimes go much above a hundred feet high as straight as a line. The oaks seem here to vie with the beeches in size as well as in loftiness and straightness.



I saw several oaks which I think were more than eighty feet high, and several with a clear stem of more than forty feet, being pretty nearly as far through at that distance from the ground as at bottom; and I think I saw more than one, with a clear stem of fifty feet, a foot and a half through at that distance from the ground. This is by far the finest *plank oak* that I ever saw in England. The road through the wood is winding and brings you out at the corner of a field, lying sloping to the south, three sides of it bordered by wood and the field planted as an orchard. This is precisely what you see in so many thousands of places in America. I had passed through Hempstead a little while before, which certainly gave its name to the township in which I lived in Long Island, and which I used to write *Hampstead*, contrary to the orthography of the place, never having heard of such a place as *Hempstead* in England. Passing through Hempstead I gave my mind a toss back to Long Island, and this beautiful wood and orchard really made me almost conceit that I was there, and gave rise to a thousand interesting and pleasant reflections. On quitting the wood I crossed the great road from London to Wendover, went across the park of Mr Drake and up a steep hill towards the great road leading to Wycombe. Mr Drake's is a very beautiful place, and has a great deal of very fine timber upon it. I think I counted pretty nearly 200 oak trees, worth, on an average, five pounds apiece, growing within twenty yards of the road that I was going along. Mr Drake has some thousands of these, I dare say, besides his beech; and, therefore, *he* will be able to stand a tug with the fundholders for some time. When I got to High Wycombe, I found everything a week earlier than in the rich part of Hertfordshire. High Wycombe, as if the name was ironical, lies along the bottom of a narrow and deep valley, the hills on each side being very steep indeed. The valley runs somewhere about from east to west, and the wheat on the hills facing the south will, if this weather continue, be fit to reap in ten days. I saw one field of oats that a bold farmer would cut next Monday. Wycombe is a very fine and very clean market town; the people all looking extremely well; the girls somewhat larger featured and larger boned than those in Sussex, and not so fresh-coloured and bright-eyed. More like the girls of America, and that is saying quite as much as any reasonable woman can expect or wish for.

Between High Wycombe and Beaconsfield, where the soil is much about that last described, the wheat continued to be equally early with that about Wycombe. As I approached Uxbridge I got off the chalk upon a gravelly bottom, and then from Uxbridge to Shepherd's Bush on a bottom of clay. Grass-fields and elm-trees, with here and there a wheat or a bean-field, form the features of this most ugly country, which would have been perfectly unbearable after quitting the neighbourhoods of Hempstead, Chesham and High Wycombe, had it not been for the diversion I derived from meeting, in all the various modes of conveyance, the cockneys going to *Ealing Fair*, which is one of those things which nature herself would almost seem to have provided for drawing off the matter and giving occasional relief to the overcharged *Wen*. I have traversed to-day what I think may be called an average of England as to corn-crops. Some of the best, certainly; and pretty nearly some of the worst. My observation as to the wheat is, that it will be a fair and average crop, and extremely early; because, though it is not a heavy crop, though the ears are not long they will be full; and the earliness seems to preclude the possibility of blight, and to ensure plump grain. The barley and oats must, upon an average, be a light crop. The peas a light crop; and as to beans, unless there have been rains where beans are mostly grown, they cannot be half a crop; for they will not endure heat. I tried masagan beans in Long Island, and could not get them to bear more than a pod or two upon a stem. Beans love cold land and shade. The earliness of the harvest (for early it must be) is always a clear advantage. This fine summer, though it may not lead to a good crop of turnips, has already put safe into store such a crop of hay as I believe England never saw before. Looking out of the window, I see the harness of the Wiltshire wagon-horses (at this moment going by) covered with the chalk-dust of that county; so that the fine weather continues in the west. The saintfoin hay has all been got in, in the chalk countries, without a drop of wet; and when that is the case, the farmers stand in no need of oats. The grass crops have been large everywhere, as well as got in in good order. The fallows must be in excellent order. It must be a sloven indeed that will sow his wheat in foul ground next autumn; and the sun, where the fallows have been well stirred, will have

done more to enrich the land than all the dung-carts and all the other means employed by the hand of man. Such a summer is a great blessing; and the only drawback is, the dismal apprehension of not seeing such another for many years to come. It is favourable for poultry, for colts, for calves, for lambs, for young animals of all descriptions, not excepting the game. The partridges will be very early. They are now getting into the roads with their young ones, to roll in the dust. The first broods of partridges in England are very frequently killed by the wet and cold; and this is one reason why the game is not so plenty here as it is in countries more blest with sun. This will not be the case this year; and, in short, this is one of the finest years that I ever knew.

## VIII

### *A Ride from Kensington to Uphusband (Hurstbourne Tarrant), via Winchester*

CHILWORTH, NEAR GUILDFORD, SURREY,

*Wednesday, 25th Sept. 1822*

THIS morning I set off, in rather a drizzling rain, from Kensington, on horseback, accompanied by my son, with an intention of going to Uphusband, near Andover, which is situated in the north-west corner of Hampshire. It is very true that I could have gone to Uphusband by travelling only about 66 miles, and in the space of about eight hours. But my object was, not to see inns and turnpike-roads, but to see the *country*; to see the farmers at home, and to see the labourers in the fields; and to do this you must go either on foot or on horseback. With a gig you cannot get about amongst byelanes and across fields, through bridle-ways and hunting-gates; and to *tramp* it is too slow, leaving the labour out of the question, and that is not a trifle.

We went through the turnpike-gate at Kensington, and immediately turned down the lane to our left, proceeded on to Fulham, crossed Putney-bridge into Surrey, went over Barnes Common, and then, going on the upper side of Richmond, got again into Middlesex, by crossing Richmond-bridge. All Middlesex is *ugly*, notwithstanding the millions upon millions which it is continually sucking up from the rest of the kingdom; and, though the Thames and its meadows now and then are seen from the road, the country is not less ugly from Richmond to Chertsey-bridge, through Twickenham, Hampton, Sunbury and Sheperton, than it is elsewhere. The soil is a gravel at bottom with a black loam at top near the Thames; further back it is a sort of spewy gravel; and the buildings consist generally of tax-eaters' showy, tea-garden-like boxes, and of shabby dwellings of labouring people who, in this part of the country, look to be about half *Saint Giles's* : dirty, and have every appearance of drinking gin.

LONDON



25 September to 31 October 1822.  
8 November to 2 December 1822.

8 November to 2 December 1822 ---

At Chertsey, where we came into Surrey again, there was a fair for horses, cattle and pigs. I did not see any sheep. Everything was exceedingly *dull*. Cart colts, two and three years old, were selling for *less than a third* of what they sold for in 1813. The cattle were of an inferior description to be sure; but the price was low almost beyond belief. Cows, which would have sold for £15 in 1813, did not get buyers at £3. I had no time to inquire much about the pigs, but a man told me that they were dirt-cheap. Near Chertsey is *Saint Anne's Hill* and some other pretty spots.

There follows a brief interpolation concerned with a grant of Crown lands made to Mr Fox—an example of what Cobbett obviously considers political corruption, though he does not actually say so. "Such are the facts: let the reader reason upon them and draw the conclusion."

This county of Surrey presents to the eye of the traveller a greater contrast than any other county in England. It has some of the very best and some of the worst lands, not only in England, but in the world. We were here upon those of the latter description. For five miles on the road towards Guildford the land is a rascally common covered with poor heath, except where the gravel is so near the top as not to suffer even the heath to grow. Here we entered the enclosed lands, which have the gravel at bottom, but a nice light, black mould at top; in which the trees grow very well. Through bye-lanes and bridle-ways we came out into the London road, between Ripley and Guildford, and immediately crossing that road, came on towards a village called Merrow.

Finding estates in this district in the hands of new owners, Cobbett once more expounds his favourite doctrine—retrenchment and economy are no remedies. It is "by the instrumentality of a base and fraudulent paper-money that loan jobbers, stock robbers, and Jews have got the estates into their hands."

To come to Chilworth, which lies on the south side of St Martha's Hill, most people would have gone along the level road to Guildford, and come round through Shawford under the hills; but we, having seen enough of streets and turnpikes, took across over Merrow Down, where the Guildford race-course is, and then mounted the "Surrey Hills," so famous for the pros-



pects they afford. Here we looked back over Middlesex, and into Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, away towards the north-west, into Essex and Kent towards the east, over part of Sussex to the south, and over part of Hampshire to the west and south-west. We are here upon a bed of chalk, where the downs always afford good sheep food. We steered for St Martha's Chapel, and went round at the foot of the lofty hill on which it stands. This brought us down the side of a steep hill, and along a bridle-way, into the narrow and exquisitely beautiful vale of Chilworth, where we were to stop for the night. This vale is skirted partly by woodlands and partly by sides of hills tilled as corn fields. The land is excellent, particularly towards the bottom. Even the arable fields are in some places, towards their tops, nearly as steep as the roof of a tiled house; and where the ground is covered with woods the ground is still more steep. Down the middle of the vale there is a series of ponds, or small *lakes*, which meet your eye, here and there, through the trees. Here are some very fine farms, a little strip of meadows, some hop-gardens, and the lakes have given rise to the establishment of powder-mills and paper-mills. The trees of all sorts grow well here; and coppices yield poles for the hop-gardens and wood to make charcoal for the powder-mills.

They are sowing wheat here, and the land, owing to the fine summer that we have had, is in a very fine state. The rain, too, which, yesterday, fell here in great abundance, has been just in time to make a really good wheat-sowing season. The turnips all the way that we have come, are good. Rather backward in some places; but in sufficient quantity upon the ground, and there is yet a good while for them to grow. All the fall fruit is excellent, and in great abundance. The grapes are as good as those raised under glass. The apples are much richer than in ordinary years. The crop of hops has been very fine here, as well as everywhere else. The crop not only large, but good in quality. They expect to get *six* pounds a hundred for them at Weyhill Fair. That is *one* more than I think they will get. The best Sussex hops were selling in the borough of Southwark at three pounds a hundred a few days before I left London. The Farnham hops *may* bring double that price; but that, I think, is as much as they will; and this is ruin to the hop-planter. The *tax*, with its attendant inconveniences, amounts

to a pound a hundred; the picking, drying, and bagging to 50s. The carrying to market not less than 5s. Here is the sum of £3 10s. of the money. Supposing the crop to be half a ton to the acre, the bare tillage will be 10s. The poles for an acre cannot cost less than £2 a year; that is another 4s. to each hundred of hops. This brings the outgoings to 82s. Then comes the manure, then come the poor-rates, and road-rates, and county-rates; and if these leave one single farthing for *rent* I think it is strange.

LEA, NEAR GODALMING, SURREY,

*Thursday, 26 Sept.*

We started from Chilworth this morning, came down the vale, left the village of Shawford to our right, and that of Wonersh to our left, and crossing the river Wey, got into the turnpike-road between Guildford and Godalming, went on through Godalming, and got to Lea, which lies to the north-east snugly under Hind-Head, about 11 o'clock. This was coming only about eight miles, a sort of rest after the 32 miles of the day before. Coming along the road, a farmer overtook us, and as he had known me from seeing me at the meeting at Epsom last year, I had a part of my main business to perform, namely, to talk politics.

We can imagine Cobbett warming to his task so that, he says, the farmer's "eyes were opened: and 'his heart seemed to burn within him as I talked to him on the way'"—of Crown lands, of loan-jobbers, of the stock-jobbing race, placemen, and pensioners!

We got into free-quarter again at Lea; and there is nothing like free-quarter, as soldiers well know. Lea is situated on the edge of that immense heath which sweeps down from the summit of Hind-Head, across to the north over innumerable hills of minor altitude and of an infinite variety of shapes towards Farnham, to the north-east, towards the Hog's Back, leading from Farnham to Guildford, and to the east, or nearly so, towards Godalming. Nevertheless, the inclosed lands at Lea are very good and singularly beautiful. The timber of all sorts grows well; the land is light, and being free from stones, very pleasant to work. If you go southward from Lea about a mile you get down into what is called, in the old Acts of Parliament, the *Weald* of Surrey. Here the land is a stiff

tenacious loam at top with blue and yellow clay beneath. This weald continues on eastward, and gets into Sussex near East Grinstead: thence it winds about under the hills, into Kent. Here the oak grows finer than in any part of England. The trees are more spiral in their form. They grow much faster than upon any other land. Yet the timber must be better; for, in some of the Acts of Queen Elizabeth's reign, it is provided that the oak for the royal navy shall come out of the Wealds of Surrey, Sussex, or Kent.

ODIHAM, HAMPSHIRE,

*Friday, 27 Sept.*

From Lea we set off this morning about six o'clock to get free-quarter again at a worthy old friend's at this nice little plain market-town. Our direct road was right over the heath through Tilford to Farnham; but we veered a little to the left after we came to Tilford, at which place on the green we stopped to look at an *oak tree*, which, when I was a little boy, was but a very little tree, comparatively, and which is now, take it altogether, by far the finest tree that I ever saw in my life. The stem or shaft is short; that is to say, it is short before you come to the first limbs; but it is full *thirty feet round*, at about eight or ten feet from the ground. Out of the stem there come not less than fifteen or sixteen limbs, many of which are from five to ten feet round, and each of which would, in fact, be considered a decent stick of timber. I am not judge enough of timber to say anything about the quantity in the whole tree, but my son stepped the ground, and as nearly as we could judge, the diameter of the extent of the branches was upwards of ninety feet, which would make a circumference of about three hundred feet. The tree is in full growth at this moment. There is a little hole in one of the limbs; but with that exception, there appears not the smallest sign of decay. The tree has made great shoots in all parts of it this last summer and spring; and there are no appearances of *white* upon the trunk, such as are regarded as the symptoms of full growth. There are many sorts of oak in England; two very distinct; one with a pale leaf, and one with a dark leaf: this is of the pale leaf. The tree stands upon Tilford-green, the soil of which is a light loam with a hard sand stone a good way beneath, and, probably, clay beneath that.

The spot where the tree stands is about a hundred and twenty feet from the edge of a little river, and the ground on which it stands may be about ten feet higher than the bed of that river.

In quitting Tilford we came on to the land belonging to Waverly Abbey, and then, instead of going on to the town of Farnham, veered away to the left towards Wrecklesham, in order to cross the Farnham and Alton turnpike-road, and to come on by the side of Crondall to Odiham. We went a little out of the way to go to a place called the *Bourn*, which lies in the heath at about a mile from Farnham. It is a winding narrow valley, down which, during the wet season of the year, there runs a stream beginning at the *Holt Forest*, and emptying itself into the *Wey* just below Moor-Park, which was the seat of Sir William Temple when Swift was residing with him. We went to this bourn in order that I might show my son the spot where I received the rudiments of my education. There is a little hop-garden in which I used to work when from eight to ten years old; from which I have scores of times run to follow the hounds, leaving the hoe to do the best it could to destroy the weeds; but the most interesting thing was a *sand-hill*, which goes from a part of the heath down to the rivulet. As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I, with two brothers, used occasionally to *desport* ourselves, as the lawyers call it, at this sand-hill. Our diversion was this: we used to go to the top of the hill, which was steeper than the roof of a house; one used to draw his arms out of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself down with his arms by his sides; and then the others, one at head and the other at feet, sent him rolling down the hill like a barrel or a log of wood. By the time he got to the bottom, his hair, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth were all full of this loose sand; then the others took their turn, and at every roll there was a monstrous spell of laughter. I had often told my sons of this while they were very little, and I now took one of them to see the spot. But that was not all. This was the spot where I was receiving my *education*; and this was the sort of education; and I am perfectly satisfied that if I had not received such an education, or something very much like it; that, if I had been brought up a milksop, with a nursery-maid everlastingly at my heels, I should have been at this day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal, as any of those frivolous idiots that are turned out from

Winchester and Westminster School, or from any of those dens of dunces called colleges and universities. It is impossible to say how much I owe to that sand-hill; and I went to return it my thanks for the ability which it probably gave me to be one of the greatest terrors, to one of the greatest and most powerful bodies of knaves and fools that ever were permitted to afflict this or any other country.

He crosses the Wey, to find a "parcel of labourers at parish work"—breaking stones for road-making, while all round are examples of useful agricultural work they could be doing if only the farmers could afford to pay them to do it.

We immediately, after this, crossed the road, and went on towards Crondall upon a soil that soon became stiff loam and flint at top with a bed of chalk beneath. We did not go to Crondall; but kept along over Slade Heath, and through a very pretty place called Well. We arrived at Odiham about half after eleven, at the end of a beautiful ride of about seventeen miles, in a very fine and pleasant day.

WINCHESTER,

*Saturday, 28th September*

Just after day-light we started for this place. By the turn-pike we could have come through Basingstoke by turning off to the right, or through Alton and Alresford by turning off to the left. Being naturally disposed towards a middle course, we chose to wind down through Upton-Gray, Preston-Candover, Chilton-Candover, Brown-Candover, then down to Ovington, and into Winchester by the north entrance. From Wrecklesham to Winchester we have come over roads and lanes of flint and chalk. The weather being dry again, the ground under you, as solid as iron, makes a great rattling with the horses' feet. The country where the soil is stiff loam upon chalk, is never bad for corn. Not rich, but never poor. There is at no time anything deserving to be called dirt in the roads. The buildings last a long time, from the absence of fogs and also the absence of humidity in the ground. The absence of dirt makes the people habitually cleanly; and all along through this country the people appear in general to be very neat. It is a country for sheep, which are always sound and good upon this iron soil.



The trees grow well, where there are trees. The woods and coppices are not numerous; but they are good, particularly the ash, which always grows well upon the chalk. The oaks, though they do not grow in the spiral form, as upon the clays, are by no means stunted; and some of them very fine trees; I take it, that they require a much greater number of years to bring them to perfection than in the *Wealds*. The wood, perhaps, may be harder; but I have heard that the oak, which grows upon these hard bottoms, is very frequently what the carpenters call *shaky*. The underwoods here consist, almost entirely, of hazel, which is very fine, and much tougher and more durable than that which grows on soils with a moist bottom. This hazel is a thing of great utility here. It furnishes rods wherewith to make fences; but its principal use is to make *wattles* for the folding of sheep in the fields. These things are made much more neatly here than in the south of Hampshire and in Sussex, or in any other part that I have seen. Chalk is the favourite soil of the *yew-tree*; and at Preston-Candover there is an avenue of yew-trees, probably a mile long, each tree containing, as nearly as I can guess, from twelve to twenty feet of timber, which, as the reader knows, implies a tree of considerable size. They have probably been a century or two in growing; but, in any way that timber can be used, the timber of the yew will last, perhaps, ten times as long as the timber of any other tree that we grow in England.

Quitting the Candovers, we came along between the two estates of the two Barings. Sir Thomas, who has supplanted the Duke of Bedford, was to our right, while Alexander, who has supplanted Lord Northington, was on our left. The latter has enclosed, as a sort of outwork to his park, a pretty little down called Northington Down, in which he has planted, here and there, a clump of trees. But Mr Baring, not reflecting that woods are not like funds, to be made at a heat, has planted his trees *too large*; so that they are covered with moss, are dying at the top, and are literally growing downward instead of upward. In short, this enclosure and plantation have totally destroyed the beauty of this part of the estate. The down, which was before very beautiful, and formed a sort of *glacis* up to the park pales, is now a marred, ragged, ugly-looking thing. The dying trees, which have been planted long enough for you not to perceive that they have been planted, excite the idea of



sterility in the soil. They do injustice to it; for, as a down, it was excellent. Everything that has been done here is to the injury of the estate, and discovers a most shocking want of taste in the projector. Sir Thomas's plantations, or, rather those of his father, have been managed more judiciously.

Cobbett voices an objection to Sir Thomas Baring's tacking "a sort of condition" to his acts of charity—that the objects of it shall adopt his own religious notions. What is required from labouring people, says Cobbett, is "common honesty, speaking the truth, and refraining of thieving." These you will obtain by seeing that the labourer has enough to eat and is free from fear. Good wages are therefore to be preferred to charity.

At Winchester, dining with the farmers at the Swan Inn, he delivers a "rustic harangue" in which, with Cobbett gusto, he argues for a great reduction in tithes. He decries the amount of taxation devoted to the paying of pensions and to the relief of poor clergy. He examines the relation of low prices to the circulation of notes by the country banks. His speech is received with enthusiasm and the company pledges itself to support a "Constitutional Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament." Measures of effectual relief can only be carried in Parliament, Cobbett maintains, by this type of support from the 'middling classes'—the yeomen and farmers, tradesmen, and men of property.

After leaving Winchester he comes upon an example of land which, when corn-growing paid good dividends during the Napoleonic wars, had been ploughed up. Now, with the fall in prices, it lies derelict.

UPHUSBAND,

*Sunday Evening, 29 Sept. 1822*

We came along the turnpike-road, through Wherwell and Andover, and got to this place about 2 o'clock. This country, except at the village and town just mentioned, is very open, a thinnish soil upon a bed of chalk. Between Winchester and Wherwell we came by some hundreds of acres of ground that was formerly most beautiful down, which was broken up in dear-corn times, and which is now a district of thistles and other weeds. If I had such land as this I would soon make it down again. I would for once (that is to say if I had the money) get it quite clean, prepare it as for sowing turnips, get the turnips if possible, feed them off early, or plough the ground if I got no turnips; sow thick with saintfoin and meadow-grass seeds

of all sorts, early in September; let the crop stand till the next July; feed it then slenderly with sheep, and dig up all thistles and rank weeds that might appear; keep feeding it, but not too close, during the summer and the fall; and keep on feeding it for ever after as a down. The saintfoin itself would last for many years; and as it disappeared, its place would be supplied by the grass; that sort which was most congenial to the soil, would at last stifle all other sorts, and the land would become a valuable down as formerly.

I see that some plantations of ash and of hazel have been made along here; but, with great submission to the planters, I think they have gone the wrong way to work, as to the mode of preparing the ground. They have planted *small trees*, and that is right; they have *trenched* the ground, and that is also right; but they have brought the bottom soil to the top; and that is *wrong*, always; and especially where the bottom soil is gravel or chalk, or clay. I know that some people will say that this is a *puff*; and let it pass for that; but if any gentleman that is going to plant trees, will look into my *Book on Gardening*, and into the chapter on *Preparing the Soil*, he will, I think, see how conveniently ground may be trenched without bringing to the top that soil in which the young trees stand so long without making shoots.

This country, though so open, has its beauties. The homesteads in the sheltered bottoms with fine lofty trees about the houses and yards, form a beautiful contrast with the large open fields. The little villages, running straggling along the dells (always with lofty trees and rookeries) are very interesting objects, even in the winter. You feel a sort of satisfaction, when you are out upon the bleak hills yourself, at the thought of the shelter, which is experienced in the dwellings in the valleys.

Andover is a neat and solid market-town. It is supported entirely by the agriculture around it; and how the makers of *population returns* ever came to think of classing the inhabitants of such a town as this under any other head than that of "*persons employed in agriculture*," would appear astonishing to any man who did not know those population return makers as well as I do.

The village of Uphusband, the legal name of which is Hurstbourn Tarrant, is, as the reader will recollect, a great favourite with me, not the less so certainly on account of the excellent free-quarter that it affords.

## IX

### *A Ride through Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and Sussex, between 7th October and 1st December, 1822*

THIS is an extensive tour, the account of which occupies much space. It illustrates all the features that give the *Rides* their unique character—descriptions of the countryside, accounts of agricultural methods, examples of rural depression, records of meetings with farmers, political outbursts, and attacks upon opponents—all intermingled in the true Cobbett manner.

7 to 10 October, 1822

At Uphusband, a little village in a deep dale, above five miles to the north of Andover, and about three miles to the south of the hills at *Highclere*. The wheat is sown here, and up, and, as usual, at this time of the year, looks very beautiful. The wages of the labourers brought down to *six shillings a week!* a horrible thing to think of; but, I hear, it is still worse in Wiltshire.

11 October

Went to Weyhill-fair, at which I was about 46 years ago, when I rode a little pony, and remember how proud I was on the occasion; but, I also remember, that my brothers, two out of three of whom were older than I, thought it unfair that my father selected me; and my own reflections upon the occasion have never been forgotten by me. The 11th of October is the Sheep-fair. About £300,000 used, some few years ago, to be carried home by the sheep-sellers. To-day, less, perhaps, than £70,000, and yet the *rents* of these sheep-sellers are, perhaps, as high, on an average, as they were then. The countenances of the farmers were descriptive of their ruinous state. I never, in all my life, beheld a more mournful scene. There is a horse-fair upon another part of the down; and there I saw horses keeping pace in depression with the sheep. A pretty numerous group of the tax-eaters, from Andover and the neighbourhood, were the only persons that had smiles on their faces.

From this dismal scene, a scene formerly so joyous, we set off back to Uphusband pretty early, were overtaken by the rain, and got a pretty good soaking. The land along here is very good. This whole country has a chalk bottom; but, in the valley on the right of the hill over which you go from Andover to Weyhill, the chalk lies far from the top, and the soil has few flints in it. It is very much like the land about Malden and Maidstone. Met with a farmer who said he must be ruined, unless another "good war" should come! This is no uncommon notion. They saw high prices *with* war, and they thought that the war was the *cause*.

12 to 16 October

The fair was too dismal for me to go to it again. My sons went two of the days, and their account of the hop-fair was enough to make one gloomy for a month, particularly as my townsmen of Farnham were, in this case, amongst the sufferers.

He addresses the farmers at Andover and at Newbury and finds opportunity for relaxation in joining the harriers. He moves on to Salisbury and the next extract makes reference to the harshness of the Game Laws of the time:

22 October

Went to dine with the farmers at Salisbury, and got back to Uphusband by ten o'clock at night, two hours later than I have been out of bed for a great many months.

In quitting Andover to go to Salisbury (17 miles from each other) you cross the beautiful valley that goes winding down amongst the hills to Stockbridge. You then rise into the open country that very soon becomes a part of that large tract of downs called Salisbury Plain. You are not in Wiltshire, however, till you are about half the way to Salisbury. You leave Tidworth away to your right. This is the seat of Asheton Smith; and the fine *coursing* that I once saw there I should have called to recollection with pleasure, if I could have forgotten the hanging of the men at Winchester last spring for resisting one of this Smith's gamekeepers!

Before you get to Salisbury, you cross the valley that brings down a little river from Amesbury. It is a very beautiful valley. There is a chain of farm-houses and little churches all

the way up it. The farms consist of the land on the flats on each side of the river, running out to a greater or less extent, at different places, towards the hills and downs. Not far above Amesbury is a little village called Netherhaven, where I once saw an *acre of hares*. We were coursing at Everly, a few miles off; and one of the party happening to say that he had seen "an acre of hares" at Mr Hicks Beech's at Netherhaven, we, who wanted to see the same, or to detect our informant, sent a messenger to beg a day's coursing, which being granted, we went over the next day. Mr Beech received us very politely. He took us into a wheat stubble close by his paddock; his son took a gallop round, cracking his whip at the same time; the hares (which were very thickly in sight before) started all over the field, ran into a *flock* like sheep; and we all agreed that the flock did cover *an acre of ground*. Mr Beech had an old greyhound, that I saw lying down in the shrubbery close by the house, while several hares were sitting and skipping about, with just as much confidence as cats sit by a dog in a kitchen or a parlour. Was this *instinct* in either dog or hares? Then, mind, this same greyhound went amongst the rest to course with us out upon the distant hills and lands; and then he ran as eagerly as the rest, and killed the hares with as little remorse. Philosophers will talk a long while before they will make men believe that this was *instinct alone*. I believe that this dog had much more reason than half of the Cossacks have; and I am sure he had a great deal more than many a negro that I have seen.

In crossing this valley to go to Salisbury, I thought of Mr Beech's hares; but I really have neither thought of nor seen any *game* with pleasure, since the hanging of the two men at Winchester. If no other man will petition for the repeal of the law under which those poor fellows suffered, I will. But let us hope that there will be no need of petitioning. Let us hope that it will be repealed without any express application for it.

Then follows a discussion on the 'deplorableness' of the farmers' state and the burden cast upon them by the payment of tithes, accompanied by one of Cobbett's stinging attacks upon the clergy.

30 October

Set off for London. Went by Alderbridge, Crookham, Brimton, Mortimer, Strathfield Say, Heckfield Heath, Eversley



Blackwater, and slept at Oakingham. This is, with trifling exceptions, a miserably poor country. Burghclere lies along at the foot of a part of that chain of hills which, in this part, divide Hampshire from Berkshire. The parish just named is, indeed, in Hampshire, but it forms merely the foot of the Highclere and Kingsclere Hills. These hills, from which you can see all across the country, even to the Isle of Wight, are of chalk, and with them, towards the north, ends the chalk. The soil over which I have come to-day is generally a stony sand upon a bed of gravel. With the exception of the land just round Crookham and the other villages, nothing can well be poorer or more villainously ugly. It is all first cousin to Hounslow Heath, of which it is, in fact, a continuation to the westward. There is a clay at the bottom of the gravel; so that you have here nasty stagnant pools without fertility of soil. The rushes grow amongst the gravel; sure sign that there is clay beneath to hold the water; for, unless there be water constantly at their roots, rushes will not grow. Such land is, however, good for *oaks* wherever there is soil enough on the top of the gravel for the oak to get hold, and to send its tap-root down to the clay. The oak is the thing to plant here; and, *therefore*, this whole country contains not one single plantation of oaks! That is to say, as far as I observed. Plenty of *fir*-trees and other rubbish have been recently planted; but no oaks.

Passing the Duke of Wellington's estate prompts Cobbett to compare the pensions and grants made to the Duke with the proposals to reduce the wages of agricultural labourers. He rides through Windsor Forest—"as bleak, as barren, and as villainous a heath as ever man set eyes on." Here are recent enclosures and new houses, while farm-houses grow fewer and fewer—a proof of national decline and not of prosperity. Cobbett thoroughly dislikes the country between Egham and Kensington—"as flat as a pancake"—and becomes explosive about the Barracks on Hounslow Heath.

On November 8 he sets out for Reading and breakfasts at the Stag and Hounds at Binfield—"a very nice country inn." He addresses the farmers at Reading, having ridden 40 miles on horseback, "slept on the road, and finished my harangue at the end of twenty-two hours from leaving Kensington . . . pretty well for 'Old Cobbett'." He is pleased with his audience at Reading. On the way to Burghclere he finds some more "rascally heaths"—



in fact, with the exception of the piece from Reading to Crookham, he considers all Berkshire over which he has recently travelled to be "very bad land and a very ugly county." Then he rides into a better district:

11 November

Uphusband *once more*, and, for the sixth time this year, over the North Hampshire Hills, which, notwithstanding their everlasting flints, I like very much. As you ride along, even in a *green lane*, the horses' feet make a noise like *hammering*. It seems as if you were riding on a mass of iron. Yet the soil is good, and bears some of the best wheat in England. All these high and, indeed, all chalky lands, are excellent for sheep. But on the top of some of these hills there are as fine meadows as I ever saw. Pasture richer, perhaps, than that about Swindon in the north of Wiltshire. And the singularity is, that this pasture is on the *very tops* of these lofty hills, from which you can see the Isle of Wight. There is a stiff loam, in some places twenty feet deep, on a bottom of chalk. Though the grass grows so finely, there is no apparent wetness in the land. The wells are more than three hundred feet deep. The main part of the water, for all uses, comes from the clouds; and, indeed, these are pretty constant companions of these chalk hills, which are very often enveloped in clouds and wet, when it is sunshine down at Burghclere or Uphusband. They manure the land here by digging *wells* in the fields, and bringing up the chalk, which they spread about on the land; and which, being free-chalk, is reduced to powder by the frosts. A considerable portion of the land is covered with wood; and as, in the clearing of the land, the clearers followed the good soil, without regard to shape of fields, the forms of the woods are of endless variety, which, added to the never-ceasing inequalities of the surface of the whole, makes this, like all the others of the same description a very pleasant country.

17 November

Set off from Uphusband for Hambleton. The first place I had to get to was Whitchurch. On my way, and at a short distance from Uphusband, down the valley, I went through a village called *Bourn*, which takes its name from the water that

runs down this valley. A *bourne*, in the language of our forefathers, seems to be a river which is, part of the year, *without water*. There is one of these bourns down this pretty valley. It has, generally, no water till towards spring, and then it runs for several months. It is the same at the Candovers, as you go across the downs from Odiham to Winchester.

The little village of *Bourn*, therefore, takes its name from its situation. Then there are two *Hurstbourns*, one above and one below this village of Bourn. *Hurst* means, I believe, a forest. There were, doubtless, one of those on each side of Bourn; and when they became villages, the one above was called *Up-hurst-bourn*, and the one below, *Down-hurstbourn*; which names have become *Uphusband* and *Downhusband*.

At Whitchurch is the mill where the paper for bank-notes is made—a spot which “ought to be held accursed in all time henceforth and for evermore!” Cobbett comes again to the estate of Sir Thomas Baring (see p. 78):

Quitting Whitchurch, I went off to the left out of the Winchester road, got out upon the highlands, took an “observation,” as the sailors call it, and off I rode, in a straight line, over hedge and ditch, towards the rising ground between Stratton Park and Micheldever Wood; but, before I reached this point, I found some wet meadows and some running water in my way in a little valley running up from the turnpike road to a little place called *West Stratton*. I, therefore, turned to my left, went down to the turnpike, went a little way along it, then turned to my left, went along by Stratton Park pales down East Stratton Street, and then on towards the Grange Park. Stratton Park is the seat of Sir Thomas Baring, who has here several thousands of acres of land; who has the living of Micheldever, to which, I think, Northington and Swallowfield are joined. Above all, he has Micheldever Wood, which, they say, contains a thousand acres, and which is one of the finest oak-woods in England.

A little girl, of whom I asked my way down into East Stratton, and who was dressed in a camlet gown, white apron and plaid cloak (it was Sunday), and who had a book in her hand, told me that Lady Baring gave her the clothes, and had her taught to read and to sing hymns and spiritual songs.

As I came through the Strattons, I saw not less than a dozen

girls clad in this same way. It is impossible not to believe that this is done with a good motive; but it is possible not to believe that it is productive of good. It must create hypocrites, and hypocrisy is the great sin of the age.

So on through Abbotson, Alresford ("a nice little town"), Hambledon, Titchbourn, Cheriton, Beauworth, Kilmston, and Exton—"all a high, hard, dry, fox-hunting country"—passing a gipsy encampment on the way:

At Cheriton I found a grand camp of *Gipsys*, just upon the move towards Alresford. I had met some of the scouts first, and afterwards the advanced guard, and here the main body was getting in motion. One of the scouts that I met was a young woman, who, I am sure, was six feet high. There were two or three more in the camp of about the same height; and some most strapping fellows of men. It is curious that this race should have preserved their dark skin and coal-black straight and coarse hair, very much like that of the American Indians. I mean the hair, for the skin has nothing of the copper-colour as that of the Indians has. It is not, either, of the Mulatto cast; that is to say, there is no yellow in it. It is a black mixed with our English colours of pale, or red, and the features are small, like those of the girls in Sussex, and often singularly pretty. The tall girl that I met at Titchbourn, who had a huckster basket on her arm, had most beautiful features. I pulled up my horse, and said, "Can you tell me my fortune, my dear?" She answered in the negative, giving me a look at the same time that seemed to say it was *too late*; and that if I had been thirty years younger she might have seen a little what she could do with me. It is, all circumstances considered, truly surprising that this race should have preserved so perfectly all its distinctive marks.

Cobbett finds that Kilmston, formerly a large village, has now decayed to two farms and a few poor cottages. He obtains a good, sweeping view from a near-by hill:

From Kilmston I went right over the downs to the top of a hill called *Beacon Hill*, which is one of the loftiest hills in the country. Here you can see the Isle of Wight in detail, a fine sweep of the sea; also away into Sussex, and over the New

Forest into Dorsetshire. Just below you, to the east, you look down upon the village of Exton; and you can see up this valley (which is called a *Bourn* too) as far as West-Meon, and down it as far as Soberton. Corhampton, Warnford, Meon-Stoke and Droxford come within these two points; so that here are six villages on this bourn within the space of about five miles. On the other side of the main valley down which the bourn runs and opposite Beacon Hill, is another such a hill, which they call *Old Winchester Hill*. On the top of this hill there was once a camp, or rather fortress; and the ramparts are now pretty nearly as visible as ever. The same is to be seen on the Beacon Hill at Highclere. These ramparts had nothing of the principles of modern fortification in their formation. You see no signs of salient angles. It was a *ditch* and a *bank*, and that appears to have been all. I had, I think, a full mile to go down from the top of Beacon Hill to Exton.

At Exton I crossed the Gosport turnpike-road, came up the cross valley under the south side of Old Winchester Hill, over Stoke Down, then over West-End Down, and then to my friend's house at West-End in the parish of Hambledon.

Thus have I crossed nearly the whole of this country from the north-west to the south-east, without going five hundred yards on a turnpike-road, and, as nearly as I could do it, in a straight line.

The whole country that I have crossed is loam and flints, upon a bottom of chalk. At Alresford there are some watered meadows, which are the beginning of a chain of meadows that goes all the way down to Winchester, and hence to Southampton; but even these meadows have, at Alresford, chalk under them. The water that supplies them comes out of a *pond*, called Alresford Pond, which is fed from the high hills in the neighbourhood. These counties are purely agricultural; and they have suffered most cruelly from the accursed Pitt-system. Their hilliness, bleakness, roughness of roads, render them unpleasant to the luxurious, effeminate, tax-eating crew, who never come near them, and who have pared them down to the very bone. The villages are all in a state of *decay*. The farm-buildings dropping down, bit by bit. The produce is, by a few great farmers, dragged to a few spots, and all the rest is falling into decay. If this infernal system could go on for forty years longer, it would

make all the labourers as much slaves as the negroes are, and subject to the same sort of discipline and management.

19 to 23 November

At West-End. Hambledon is a long, straggling village, lying in a little valley formed by some very pretty but not lofty hills. The environs are much prettier than the village itself, which is not far from the north side of Portsdown Hill. This must have once been a considerable place; for here is a church pretty nearly as large as that at Farnham in Surrey, which is quite sufficient for a large town. The means of living has been drawn away from these villages, and the people follow the means.

Wherever possible he likes to avoid the turnpike roads and is often well rewarded for his choice of an alternative cross-country route:

24 Nov. Sunday

Set off from Hambledon to go to Thursley in Surrey, about five miles from Godalming. Here I am at Thursley, after as interesting a day as I ever spent in all my life. They say that "*variety* is charming," and this day I have had of scenes and of soils a variety indeed!

To go to Thursley from Hambledon the plain way was up the downs to Petersfield, and then along the turnpike-road through Liphook, and over Hindhead, at the north-east foot of which Thursley lies. But I had been over that sweet Hindhead, and had seen too much of turnpike-road and of heath, to think of taking another so large a dose of them. The map of Hampshire (and we had none of Surrey) showed me the way to Headley, which lies on the west of Hindhead, down upon the flat. I knew it was but about five miles from Headley to Thursley; and I, therefore, resolved to go to Headley, in spite of all the remonstrances of friends, who represented to me the danger of breaking my neck at Hawkley and of getting buried in the bogs of Woolmer Forest. My route was through East-Meon, Froxfield, Hawkley, Greatham, and then over Woolmer Forest (a *heath* if you please), to Headley.

Off we set over the downs (crossing the bottom sweep of Old Winchester Hill) from West-End to East-Meon. We came down a long and steep hill that led us winding round into the



village, which lies in a valley that runs in a direction nearly east and west, and that has a rivulet that comes out of the hills towards Petersfield. If I had not seen anything further to-day, I should have dwelt long on the beauties of this place. Here is a very fine valley, in nearly an elliptical form, sheltered by high hills sloping gradually from it; and not far from the middle of this valley there is a hill nearly in the form of a goblet-glass with the foot and stem broken off and turned upside down. And this is clapped down upon the level of the valley, just as you would put such goblet upon a table. The hill is lofty, partly covered with wood, and it gives an air of great singularity to the scene. I am sure that East-Meon has been a *large place*. The church has a *Saxon tower* pretty nearly equal, as far as I recollect, to that of the cathedral at Winchester. The rest of the church has been rebuilt, and, perhaps, several times; but the *tower* is complete; it has had a *steeple* put upon it; but it retains all its beauty, and it shows that the church (which is still large) must, at first, have been a very large building.

Cobbett then falls into a fallacious line of reasoning—that the size of these churches proves, contrary to statistics, that the population of England is not increasing but decreasing—"I do not believe one word of what is said of the increase of population." He continues his account of the day's ride:

24 November

(Sunday.) From Hambledon to Thursley (continued).

From East-Meon, I did not go on to Froxfield church, but turned off to the left to a place (a couple of houses) called *Bower*. Near this I stopped at a friend's house, which is in about as lonely a situation as I ever saw. A very pleasant place however. The lands dry, a nice mixture of woods and fields, and a great variety of hill and dell.

Before I came to East-Meon, the soil of the hills was a shallow loam with flints, on a bottom of chalk; but, on this side of the valley of East-Meon; that is to say, on the north side, the soil on the hills is a deep, stiff loam, on a bed of a sort of gravel mixed with chalk; and the stones, instead of being grey on the outside and blue on the inside, are yellow on the outside and whitish on the inside. In coming on further to the north, I found that the bottom was sometimes gravel and sometimes



chalk. Here, at the time when *whatever it was* that formed these hills and valleys, the stuff of which Hindhead is composed seems to have run down and mixed itself with the stuff of which *Old Winchester Hill* is composed. Free chalk (which is the sort found here) is excellent manure for stiff land, and it produces a complete change in the nature of *clays*. It is, therefore, dug here, on the north of East-Meon, about in the fields, where it happens to be found, and is laid out upon the surface, where it is crumbled to powder by the frost, and thus gets incorporated with the loam.

At Bower I got instructions to go to Hawkley, but accompanied with most earnest advice not to go that way, for that it was impossible to get along. The roads were represented as so bad; the floods so much out; the hills and bogs so dangerous; that, really, I began to *doubt*; and, if I had not been brought up amongst the clays of the Holt Forest and the bogs of the neighbouring heaths, I should certainly have turned off to my right, to go over Hindhead, great as was my objection to going that way. "Well, then," said my friend at Bower, "if you *will* go that way, by G—, you must go down *Hawkley Hanger*;" of which he then gave me *such* a description! But even this I found to fall short of the reality. I inquired simply, whether *people were in the habit* of going down it; and the answer being in the affirmative, on I went through green lanes and bridle-ways till I came to the turnpike-road from Petersfield to Winchester, which I crossed, going into a narrow and almost untrdden green lane, on the side of which I found a cottage. Upon my asking the way to *Hawkley*, the woman at the cottage said, "Right up the lane, sir; you'll come to a *hanger* presently: you must take care, sir: you can't ride down: will your horses *go alone*?"

On we trotted up this pretty green lane; and indeed, we had been coming gently and generally uphill for a good while. The lane was between highish banks and pretty high stuff growing on the banks, so that we could see no distance from us, and could receive not the smallest hint of what was so near at hand. The lane had a little turn towards the end; so that, out we came, all in a moment, at the very edge of the hanger! And never, in all my life, was I so surprised and so delighted! I pulled up my horse, and sat and looked; and it was like looking

from the top of a castle down into the sea, except that the valley was land and not water. I looked at my servant, to see what effect this unexpected sight had upon him. His surprise was as great as mine, though he had been bred amongst the North Hampshire hills. Those who had so strenuously dwelt on the dirt and dangers of this route, had said not a word about beauties, the matchless beauties of the scenery. These hangers are woods on the sides of very steep hills. The trees and under-wood *hang*, in some sort, to the ground, instead of *standing on* it. Hence these places are called *Hangers*. From the summit of that which I had now to descend, I looked down upon the villages of Hawkey, Greatham, Selborne and some others.

From the south-east, round, southward, to the north-west, the main valley has cross-valleys running out of it, the hills on the sides of which are very steep, and, in many parts, covered with wood. The hills that form these cross-valleys run out into the main valley, like piers into the sea. Two of these promontories, of great height, are on the west side of the main valley, and were the first objects that struck my sight when I came to the edge of the hanger, which was on the south. The ends of these promontories are nearly perpendicular, and their tops so high in the air, that you cannot look at the village below without something like a feeling of apprehension. The leaves are all off, the hop-poles are in stack, the fields have little verdure; but, while the spot is beautiful beyond description even now, I must leave to imagination to suppose what it is when the trees and hangers and hedges are in leaf, the corn waving, the meadows bright, and the hops upon the poles!

From the south-west, round, eastward, to the north, lie the *heaths*, of which Woolmer Forest makes a part, and these go gradually rising up to Hindhead, the crown of which is to the north-west, leaving the rest of the circle (the part from north to north-west) to be occupied by a continuation of the valley towards Headley, Binstead, Frensham and the Holt Forest. So that even the *contrast* in the view from the top of the hanger is as great as can possibly be imagined. Men, however, are not to have such beautiful views as this without some trouble. We had had the view; but we had to go down the hanger. We had, indeed, some roads to get along, as we could, afterwards; but we had to get down the hanger first. The horses took the lead,

and crept partly down upon their feet and partly upon their hocks. It was extremely slippery too; for the soil is a sort of marl, or, as they call it here, maume, or mame, which is, when wet, very much like *grey soap*. In such a case it was likely that I should keep in the rear, which I did, and I descended by taking hold of the branches of the underwood, and so letting myself down. When we got to the bottom, I bade my man, when he should go back to Uphusband, tell the people there that *Ashmansworth Lane* is not the *worst* piece of road in the world. Our worst, however, was not come yet, nor had we by any means seen the most novel sights.

After crossing a little field and going through a farmyard, we came into a lane, which was, at once, road and river. We found a hard bottom, however; and when we got out of the water, we got into a lane with high banks. The banks were quarries of white stone, like Portland-stone, and the bed of the road was of the same stone; and, the rains having been heavy for a day or two before, the whole was as clean and as white as the steps of a fundholder or dead-weight doorway in one of the squares of the *Wen*. Here were we, then, going along a stone road with stone banks, and yet the underwood and trees grew well upon the tops of the banks. In the solid stone beneath us, there were a horse-track and wheel-tracks, the former about three and the latter about six inches deep. How many many ages it must have taken the horses' feet, the wheels, and the water, to wear down this stone so as to form a hollow way! The horses seemed alarmed at their situation; they trod with fear; but they took us along very nicely, and, at last, got us safe into the indescribable dirt and mire of the road from Hawkley Green to Greatham. Here the bottom of all the land is this solid white stone, and the top is that *mame*, which I have before described. The hop-roots penetrate down into this stone. How deep the stone may go I know not; but, when I came to look up at the end of one of the piers, or promontories, mentioned above, I found that it was all of this same stone.

At Hawkley Green I asked a farmer the way to Thursley. He pointed to one of two roads going from the green; but, it appearing to me that that would lead me up to the London road and over Hindhead, I gave him to understand that I was resolved to get along, somehow or other, through the "low

countries." He besought me not to think of it. However, finding me resolved, he got a man to go a little way to put me into the Greatham road. The man came, but the farmer could not let me go off without renewing his entreaties that I would go away to Liphook, in which entreaties the man joined, though he was to be paid very well for his trouble.

Off we went, however, to Greatham. I am thinking whether I ever did see *worse* roads. Upon the whole, I think, I have; though I am not sure that the roads of New Jersey, between Trenton and Elizabeth Town, at the breaking up of winter, be worse. Talk of *shows*, indeed! Take a piece of this road; just a cut across, and a rod long, and carry it up to London. That would be something like a *show*!

Upon leaving Greatham we came out upon Woolmer Forest. Just as we were coming out of Greatham, I asked a man the way to Thursley. "You *must* go to *Liphook*, sir," said he. "But," I said, "I *will not* go to Liphook." These people seemed to be posted at all these stages to turn me aside from my purpose, and to make me go over that *Hindhead*, which I had resolved to avoid. I went on a little further, and asked another man the way to Headley, which, as I have already observed, lies on the western foot of Hindhead, whence I knew there must be a road to Thursley (which lies at the north-east foot) without going over that miserable hill. The man told me that I must go across the *forest*. I asked him whether it was a *good* road: "It is a *sound* road," said he, laying a weighty emphasis upon the word *sound*. "Do people go it?" said I. "*Ye-es*," said he. "Oh then," said I, to my man, "as it is a *sound* road, keep you close to my heels, and do not attempt to go aside, not even for a foot." Indeed, it was a *sound* road. The rain of the night had made the fresh horse tracks visible. And we got to Headley in a short time, over a sand-road, which seemed so delightful after the flints and stone and dirt and sloughs that we had passed over and through since the morning! This road was not, if we had been benighted, without its dangers, the forest being full of quags and quicksands. This is a tract of Crown-lands, or, properly speaking, *public-lands*, on some parts of which our land steward, Mr Huskisson, is making some plantations of trees, partly fir, and partly other trees. What he can plant the *fir* for, God only knows, seeing that the country is already over-stocked

with that rubbish. But this *public-land* concern is a very great concern.

We got to Headley, the sign of the Holly Bush, just at dusk; and just as it began to rain. I had neither eaten nor drunk since eight o'clock in the morning; and as it was a nice little public-house, I at first intended to stay all night, an intention that I afterwards very indiscreetly gave up. I had *laid my plan*, which included the getting to Thursley that night. When, therefore, I had got some cold bacon and bread, and some milk, I began to feel ashamed of stopping short of my *plan*, especially after having so heroically persevered in the "stern path," and so disdainfully scorned to go over Hindhead. I knew that my road lay through a hamlet called *Churt*, where they grow such fine *bennet-grass* seed. There was a moon; but there was also a hazy rain. I had heaths to go over, and I might go into quags. Wishing to execute my plan, however, I at last brought myself to quit a very comfortable turf-fire, and to set off in the rain, having bargained to give a man three shillings to guide me out to the northern foot of Hindhead. I took care to ascertain that my guide knew the road perfectly well; that is to say, I took care to ascertain it as far as I could, which was, indeed, no further than his word would go. Off we set, the guide mounted on his own or master's horse, and with a white smock frock, which enabled us to see him clearly. We trotted on pretty fast for about half an hour; and I perceived, not without some surprise, that the rain, which I knew to be coming from the *south*, met me full in the face, when it ought, according to my reckoning, to have beat upon my right cheek. I called to the guide repeatedly to ask him if he was *sure that he was right*, to which he always answered, "Oh! yes sir, I know the road." I did not like this, "*I know the road.*" At last, after going about six miles in nearly a southern direction, the guide turned short to the left. That brought the rain upon my right cheek, and, though I could not very well account for the long stretch to the south, I thought that, at any rate, we were *now* in the right track; and, after going about a mile in this new direction, I began to ask the guide *how much further we had to go*; for I had got a pretty good soaking, and was rather impatient to see the foot of Hindhead. Just at this time, in raising my head and looking forward as I spoke to the guide, what should I see but a



long, high, and steep *hanger* arising before us, the trees along the top of which I could easily distinguish! The fact was, we were just getting to the outside of the heath, and were on the brow of a steep hill, which faced this hanging wood. The guide had begun to descend; and I had called to him to stop; for the hill was so steep, that, rain as it did and wet as my saddle must be, I got off my horse in order to walk down. But, now behold, the fellow discovered that he *had lost his way!*—Where we were I could not even guess. There was but one remedy, and that was to get back, if we could. I became guide now; and did as Mr Western is advising the ministers to do, *retraced* my steps. We went back about half the way that we had come, when we saw two men, who showed us the way that we ought to go. At the end of about a mile, we fortunately found the turnpike-road; not, indeed, at the *foot*, but on the *tip-top* of that very Hindhead, on which I had so repeatedly *vowed* I would not go! We came out on the turnpike some hundred yards on the Liphook side of the buildings called *the Hut*; so that we had the whole of three miles of hill to come down at not much better than a foot pace, with a good pelting rain at our backs.

It is odd enough how differently one is affected by the same sight, under different circumstances. At the "*Holly Bush*" at Headley there was a room full of fellows in white smock frocks, drinking and smoking and talking, and I, who was then dry and warm, *moralized* within myself on their *folly* in spending their time in such a way. But when I got down from Hindhead to the public-house at Road Lane, with my skin soaking and my teeth chattering, I thought just such another group, whom I saw through the window sitting round a good fire with pipes in their mouths, the *wisest assembly* I had ever set my eyes on. A real *Collective Wisdom*. And I most solemnly declare, that I felt a greater veneration for them than I have ever felt even for the *Privy Council*, notwithstanding the Right Honourable Charles Wynn and the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair belong to the latter.

It was now but a step to my friend's house, where a good fire and a change of clothes soon put all to rights, save and except the having come over Hindhead after all my resolutions. This mortifying circumstance; this having been *beaten*, lost the guide the *three shillings* that I had agreed to give him. "Either,"



said I, "you did not know the way well, or you did: if the former, it was dishonest in you to undertake to guide me: if the latter you have wilfully led me miles out of my way." He grumbled; but off he went. He certainly deserved nothing; for he did not know the way, and he prevented some other man from earning and receiving the money. But had he not caused me to *get upon Hindhead*, he would have had the three shillings. I had, at one time, got my hand in my pocket; but the thought of having been *beaten* pulled it out again.

Thus ended the most interesting day, as far as I know, that I ever passed in all my life. Hawkley-hangers, promontories, and stone-roads will always come into my mind when I see, or hear of, picturesque views. I forgot to mention that, in going from Hawkley to Greatham, the man who went to show me the way, told me at a certain fork, "that road goes to *Selborne*." This put me in mind of a book, which was once recommended to me, but which I never saw, entitled *The History and Antiquities of Selborne* (or something of that sort), written, I think, by a parson of the name of *White*, brother of Mr *White*, so long a bookseller in Fleet Street. This parson had, I think, the living of the parish of Selborne. The book was mentioned to me as a work of great curiosity and interest. But, at that time, the *THING* was biting *so very sharply* that one had no attention to bestow on antiquarian researches. Wheat at 39s. a quarter, and South-Down ewes at 12s. 6d. have so weakened the *THING's* jaws and so filed down its teeth, that I shall now certainly read this book if I can get it. By the bye, if *all the parsons*, had, for the last thirty years, employed their leisure time in writing the histories of their several parishes, instead of living, as many of them have, engaged in pursuits that I need not here name, neither their situation nor that of their flocks would, perhaps, have been the worse for it at this day.

The record for November 25 is concerned with an argument for the reform of Parliament and closes with the typical declaration: "Some people will blame me for speaking out so broadly upon this subject, but I think it the best to disguise nothing; to do what is right; to be sincere; and to let come what will."

Riding back through Guildford and Dorking, Cobbett finds some good country, and the gardener in him rejoices at Mr Drummond's estate:

*November 29*

Went on to Guildford, where I slept. Everybody that has been from Godalming to Guildford, knows that there is hardly another such a pretty four miles in all England. The road is good; the soil is good; the houses are neat; the people are neat: the hills, the woods, the meadows, all are beautiful. Nothing wild and bold, to be sure, but exceedingly pretty; and it is almost impossible to ride along these four miles without feelings of pleasure, though you have rain for your companion, as it happened to be with me.

DORKING,

*November 30*

I came over the high hill on the south of Guildford, and came down to Chilworth, and up the valley to Albury. I noticed, in my first Rural Ride, this beautiful valley, its hangers, its meadows, its hop-gardens, and its ponds. This valley of Chilworth has great variety, and is very pretty; but after seeing Hawkley, every other place loses in point of beauty and interest. This pretty valley of Chilworth has a run of water which comes out of the high hills, and which, occasionally, spreads into a pond; so that there is in fact a series of ponds connected by this run of water. This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful providence, as one of the choicest retreats of man; which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been, by ungrateful man, so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable of purposes; in carrying into execution two of the most damnable inventions that ever sprang from the minds of men under the influence of the devil! namely, the making of *gunpowder* and of *bank-notes*! Here in this tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England; where the first bursting of the buds is seen in spring, where no rigour of seasons can ever be felt; where everything seems formed for precluding the very thought of wickedness; here has the devil fixed on as one of the seats of his grand manufactory; and perverse and ungrateful man not only lends him his aid, but lends it cheerfully! As to the gunpowder, indeed, we might get over that. In some cases that may be innocently, and, when it sends the lead at the hordes that support a tyrant,

meritoriously employed. The alders and the willows, therefore, one can see, without so much regret, turned into powder by the waters of this valley; but, the *bank-notes*! To think that the springs which God has commanded to flow from the sides of these happy hills, for the comfort and the delight of man; to think that these springs should be perverted into means of spreading misery over a whole nation; and that, too, under the base and hypocritical pretence of promoting its *credit* and maintaining its *honour* and its *faith*! There was one circumstance, indeed, that served to mitigate the melancholy excited by these reflections; namely, that a part of these springs have, at times, assisted in turning rags into *Registers*! Somewhat cheered by the thought of this, but, still, in a more melancholy mood than I had been for a long while, I rode on with my friend towards *Albury*, up the valley, the sand-hills on one side of us and the chalk-hills on the other. *Albury* is a little village consisting of a few houses, with a large house or two near it. At the end of the village we came to a park, which is the residence of Mr Drummond.—Having heard a great deal of this park, and of the gardens, I wished very much to see them. My way to Dorking lay through Shire, and it went along on the outside of the park. I *guessed*, as the Yankees say, that there must be a way through the park to Shire; and I fell upon the scheme of going into the park as far as Mr Drummond's house, and then asking his leave to go out at the other end of it. This scheme, though pretty barefaced, succeeded very well. It is true that I was aware that I had not a *Norman* to deal with; or I should not have ventured upon the experiment. I sent in word that, having got into the park, I should be exceedingly obliged to Mr Drummond if he would let me go out of it on the side next to Shire. He not only granted this request, but, in the most obliging manner, permitted us to ride all about the park, and to see his gardens, which, without any exception, are, to my fancy, the prettiest in England; that is to say, that I ever saw in England.

They say that these gardens were laid out for one of the Howards, in the reign of Charles the Second, by Mr Evelyn, who wrote the *Sylva*. The mansion-house, which is by no means magnificent, stands on a little flat by the side of the parish church, having a steep, but not lofty, hill rising up on the south side of it. It looks right across the gardens, which lie on the

slope of a hill which runs along at about a quarter of a mile distant from the front of the house. The gardens, of course, lie facing the south. At the back of them, under the hill, is a high wall; and there is also a wall at each end, running from north to south. Between the house and the gardens there is a very beautiful run of water, with a sort of little wild narrow sedgy meadow. The gardens are separated from this by a hedge, running along from east to west. From this hedge there go up the hill, at right angles, several other hedges, which divide the land here into distinct gardens, or orchards. Along at the top of these there goes a yew hedge, or, rather, a row of small yew trees, the trunks of which are bare for about eight or ten feet high, and the tops of which form one solid head of about ten feet high, while the bottom branches come out on each side of the row about eight feet horizontally. This hedge, or row, is *a quarter of a mile long*. There is a nice hard sand-road under this species of umbrella; and, summer and winter, here is a most delightful walk! Behind this row of yews there is a space, or garden (a quarter of a mile long you will observe), about thirty or forty feet wide, as nearly as I can recollect. At the back of this garden, and facing the yew-tree row, is a wall probably ten feet high, which forms the breastwork of a *terrace*; and it is this terrace which is the most beautiful thing that I ever saw in the gardening way. It is a quarter of a mile long, and, I believe, between thirty and forty feet wide; of the finest green sward, and as level as a die.

The wall, along at the back of this terrace, stands close against the hill, which you see with the trees and underwood upon it rising above the wall. So that here is the finest spot for fruit trees that can possibly be imagined. At both ends of this garden the trees in the park are lofty, and there are a pretty many of them. The hills on the south side of the mansion-house are covered with lofty trees, chiefly beeches and chestnut: so that a warmer, a more sheltered, spot than this, it seems to be impossible to imagine. Observe, too, how judicious it was to plant the row of yew trees at the distance which I have described from the wall which forms the breastwork of the terrace: that wall, as well as the wall at the back of the terrace, are covered with fruit trees, and the yew-tree row is just high enough to defend the former from winds, without injuring it

by its shade. In the middle of the wall, at the back of the terrace, there is a recess, about thirty feet in front and twenty feet deep, and here is a *basin*, into which rises a spring coming out of the hill. The overflowings of this basin go under the terrace and down across the garden into the rivulet below. So that here is water at the top, across the middle, and along at the bottom of this garden. Take it altogether, this, certainly, is the prettiest garden that I ever beheld. There was taste and sound judgment at every step in the laying out of this place. Everywhere utility and convenience is combined with beauty. The terrace is by far the finest thing of the sort that I ever saw, and the whole thing altogether is a great compliment to the taste of the times in which it was formed. I know there are some ill-natured persons who will say that I want a revolution that would turn Mr Drummond out of this place and put me into it. Such persons will hardly believe me, but upon my word I do not. From everything that I hear, Mr Drummond is very worthy of possessing it himself, seeing that he is famed for his justice and his kindness *towards the labouring classes*, who, God knows, have very few friends amongst the rich. If what I have heard be true, Mr Drummond is singularly good in this way; for instead of hunting down an unfortunate creature who has exposed himself to the lash of the law; instead of regarding a crime committed as proof of an inherent disposition to commit crime; instead of rendering the poor creatures desperate by this species of *proscription*, and forcing them on to the *gallows*, merely because they have once merited the *Bridewell*; instead of this, which is the common practice throughout the country, he rather seeks for such unfortunate creatures to take them into his employ, and thus to reclaim them, and to make them repent of their former courses. If this be true, and I am credibly informed that it is, I know of no man in England so worthy of his estate. There may be others, to act in like manner; but I neither know nor have heard of any other. I had, indeed, heard of this, at Alresford in Hampshire; and, to say the truth, it was this circumstance, and this alone, which induced me to ask the favour of Mr Drummond to go through his park.

I saw, in the gardens at Albury Park, what I never saw before in all my life; that is, some plants of the *American Cranberry*. I never saw them in America; for there they grow in those



swamps into which I never happened to go at the time of their bearing fruit. I may have seen the plant, but I do not know that I ever did. Here it not only grows, but bears; and there are still some cranberries on the plants now. I tasted them, and they appeared to me to have just the same taste as those in America. They grew in a long bed near the stream of water which I have spoken about, and therefore it is clear that they may be cultivated with great ease in this country. The road, through Shire along to Dorking, runs up the valley between the chalk-hills and the sand-hills; the chalk to our left and the sand to our right. This is called the Home Dale. It begins at Reigate and terminates at Shalford Common, down below Chilworth.

Discussions on the inability of farmers to pay their rents are mingled with these descriptive passages and the account of this ride, or series of rides, concludes with an illuminating summing-up of Cobbett's method :

Thus, sir, have I led you about the country. All sorts of things have I talked of, to be sure; but there are very few of these things which have not their interest of one sort or another. At the end of a hundred miles or two of travelling, stopping here and there; talking freely with everybody; hearing what gentlemen, farmers, tradesmen, journeymen, labourers, women, girls, boys, and all have to say; reasoning with some, laughing with others, and observing all that passes; and especially if your manner be such as to remove every kind of reserve from every class; at the end of a tramp like this, you get impressed upon your mind a true picture, not only of the state of the country, but of the state of the people's minds throughout the country. And, sir, whether you believe me or not, I have to tell you, that it is my decided opinion that the people, high and low, with one unanimous voice, except where they live upon the taxes, *impute their calamities to the House of Commons*. Whether they be right or wrong is not so much the question, in this case. That such is the fact I am certain; and, having no power to make any change myself, I must leave the making or the refusing of the change to those who have the power. I repeat, and with perfect sincerity, that it would give me as much pain as it would give to any man in England, to see a change *in the form of the*



*government.* With *King, Lords, and Commons*, this nation enjoyed many ages of happiness and of glory. *Without Commons*, my opinion is, it never can again see anything but misery and shame; and when I say Commons I *mean* Commons, and, by Commons, I mean men elected by the free voice of the untitled and unprivileged part of the people, who, in fact as well as in law, are the Commons of England.

## X

### *A Ride from Kensington to Worth, in Sussex*

THIS ride was undertaken in the spring of 1823, and the following one in the summer of the same year. We see from them that a fine spring which promised a good harvest was succeeded by a very wet summer when many of the crops were either spoiled or harvested very late.

Cobbett, always upset by the growth of 'wens', is equally incensed at the development of the modern habit of living well out of London and coming up to business by coach from such places as Brighton.

*Monday, May 5, 1823*

From London to Reigate, through Sutton, is about as villainous a tract as England contains. The soil is a mixture of gravel and clay, with big yellow stones in it, sure sign of really bad land. Before you descend the hill to go into Reigate, you pass *Gatton*, which is a very rascally spot of earth. The trees are here a week later than they are at Tooting. At Reigate they are (in order to save a few hundred yards length of road) cutting through a hill. They have lowered a little hill on the London side of Sutton. Thus is the money of the country actually thrown away: the produce of labour is taken from the industrious, and given to the idlers. Mark the process; the town of Brighton, in Sussex, 50 miles from the Wen, is on the sea-side, and is thought by the stock-jobbers to afford a *salubrious air*. It is so situated that a coach, which leaves it not very early in the morning, reaches London by noon; and, starting to go back in two hours and a half afterwards, reaches Brighton not very late at night. Great parcels of stock-jobbers stay at Brighton with the women and children. They skip backward and forward on the coaches, and actually carry on stock-jobbing, in 'Change Alley, though they reside at Brighton. This place is, besides, a place of great resort with the *whiskered* gentry. There are not less than about twenty coaches that leave the Wen every day for this place; and there being three or four different

roads, there is a great rivalry for the custom. This sets the people to work to shorten and to level the roads; and here you see hundreds of men and horses constantly at work to make pleasant and quick travelling.

The blackthorns are in full bloom, and make a grand show. When you quit Reigate to go towards Crawley, you enter on what is called the *Weald of Surrey*. It is a level country, and the soil a very, very strong loam, with clay beneath to a great depth. The fields are small, and about a third of the land covered with oak-woods and coppice-woods. This is a country of wheat and beans; the latter of which are about three inches high, the former about seven, and both looking very well. I did not see a field of bad-looking wheat from Reigate Hill foot to Crawley, nor from Crawley across to this place, where, though the whole country is but poorish, the wheat looks very well; and if this weather hold about twelve days, we shall recover the lost time. They have been stripping trees (taking the bark off) about five or six days. The nightingales sing very much, which is a sign of warm weather. The house-martins and the swallows are come in abundance; and they seldom do come until the weather be set in for mild.

*Wednesday, 7 May*

The weather is very fine and warm; the leaves of the *Oaks* are coming out very fast: some of the trees are nearly in half-leaf. The *Birches* are out in leaf. I do not think that I ever saw the wheat look, take it all together, so well as it does at this time. I see, in the stiff land, no signs of worm or slug. The winter, which destroyed so many turnips, must, at any rate, have destroyed these mischievous things. The oats look well. The barley is very young; but I do not see anything amiss with regard to it.—The land between this place and Reigate is stiff. How the corn may be, in other places, I know not; but, in coming down, I met with a farmer of Bedfordshire, who said that the wheat looked very well in that county; which is not a county of clay, like the *Weald of Surrey*. I saw a Southdown farmer, who told me that the wheat is good there, and that is a fine corn-country. The bloom of the fruit trees is the finest I ever saw in England. The pear-bloom is, at a distance, like that of the *Gueldre Rose*; so large and bold are the bunches. The plum

is equally fine; and even the blackthorn (which is the hedge-plum) has a bloom finer than I ever saw it have before. It is rather *early* to offer any opinion as to the crop of corn; but if I were compelled to bet upon it, I would bet upon a good crop.

The record of this ride closes with a passing reference to Cobbett's endeavours to introduce into England straw plaiting for the making of "English Leghorn" hats. Details of the scheme are given in his *Cottage Economy*, and fuller reference will be found at p. 287 in the account of his visit to Tring. In 1821 the Society of Arts recognized his efforts by presenting to him a silver medal.

## XI

### *A Ride from London across Surrey, across the west of Sussex, and into the south-east of Hampshire*

THE summer of 1823 is in strong contrast to that of 1822, and is obviously a very wet one, with much rain and little sun. Those who believe in under-production as a cure for bad prices are pleased, but Cobbett has no patience with such economics. The only people who benefit are the merchants, he contends, and he launches into an attack on Quakers, who, he argues, since they merely trade but do not produce, grow rich while the farmer is ruined. It is only fair to point out that the Rev. Pitt Cobbett, in his 1885 edition of the *Rural Rides*, says that Cobbett's opposition was only to Quakers engaged in trade, for some of his best friends were Quaker farmers.

The rye, along the roadside, is ripe enough; and some of it is reaped and in shock. At Mearstam there is a field of cabbages, which, I was told, belonged to Colonel Joliffe. They appear to be early Yorks, and look very well. The rows seem to be about eighteen inches apart. There may be from 15,000 to 20,000 plants to the acre; and I dare say that they will weigh three pounds each, or more. I know of no crop of cattle food equal to this. If they be early Yorks, they will be in perfection in October, just when the grass is almost gone. No five acres of common grass land will, during the year, yield cattle food equal, either in quantity or quality, to what one acre of land, in early Yorks, will produce during three months.

WORTH (SUSSEX),  
Wednesday, 30 July

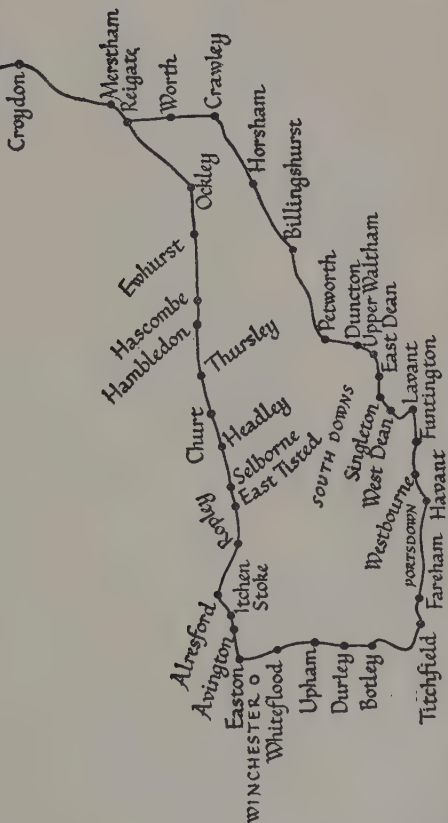
Worth is ten miles from Reigate on the Brighton road, which goes through Horley. Reigate has the Surrey chalk hills close to it on the north, and sand hills along on its south, and nearly close to it also. As soon as you are over the sand hills, you come into a country of *deep* clay; and this is called the *Weald* of Surrey. This Weald winds away round, towards the west



into Sussex, and towards the east into Kent. In this part of Surrey, it is about eight miles wide, from north to south, and ends just as you enter the parish of Worth, which is the first parish (in this part) in the county of Sussex. All across the Weald (the strong and stiff clays) the corn looks very well. I found it looking well from the Wen to Reigate, on the villainous spewy soil between the Wen and Croydon; on the chalk from Croydon to near Reigate; on the loam, sand and chalk (for there are all three) in the valley of Reigate; but not quite so well on the sand. On the clay all the corn looks well. The wheat, where it has begun to die, is dying of a good colour, not black, nor in any way that indicates blight. It is, however, all backward. Some few fields of white wheat are changing colour; but for the greater part it is quite green; and though a sudden change of weather might make a great alteration in a short time, it does appear that the harvest must be later than usual. When I say this, however, I by no means wish to be understood as saying, that it must be so late as to be injurious to the crop. In 1816, I saw a barleyrick making in November. In 1821, I saw wheat uncut, in Suffolk, in October. If we were now to have good, bright, hot weather, for as long a time as we have had wet, the whole of the corn, in these southern counties, would be housed, and great part of it threshed out, by the 10th of September. So that all depends on the weather, which appears to be clearing up in spite of Saint Swithin. This saint's birthday is the 15th of July; and it is said that, if rain fall on his birthday, it will fall on *forty days* successively. But, I believe, that you reckon retrospectively as well as prospectively; and if this be the case, we may, this time, escape the extreme unction; for it began to rain on the 26th of June; so that it rained 19 days before the 15th of July; and as it has rained 16 days since, it has rained, in the whole, 35 days, and, of course, five days more will satisfy this wet soul of a saint. Let him take his five days; and there will be plenty of time for us to have wheat at four shillings a bushel. But if the saint will give us no credit for the 19 days, and will insist upon his forty daily drenchings *after* the fifteenth of July; if he will have such a soaking as this at the celebration of the anniversary of his birth, let us hope that he is prepared with a miracle for feeding us, and with a still more potent miracle for keeping the farmers from

# Rural Rides \* 11 & 12

LONDON



riding over us, filled, as Lord Liverpool thinks their pockets will be, by the annihilation of their crops!

The upland meadow grass is, a great deal of it, not cut yet, along the Weald. So that, in these parts, there has not been a great deal of hay spoiled. The clover hay was got in very well; and only a small part of the meadow hay has been spoiled in this part of the country. This is not the case, however, in other parts, where the grass was forwarder, and where it was cut before the rain came. Upon the whole, however, much hay does not appear to have been spoiled as yet. The farmers along here, have, most of them, begun to cut to-day. This has been a fine day; and it is clear that they expect it to continue. I saw but two pieces of swedish turnips between the Wen and Reigate, but one at Reigate, and but one between Reigate and Worth. During a like distance, in Norfolk or Suffolk, you would see two or three hundred fields of this sort of root. Those that I do see here, look well. The white turnips are just up, or just sown, though there are some which have rough leaves already. This Weald is, indeed, not much of land for turnips; but from what I see here, and from what I know of the weather, I think that the turnips must be generally good. The after-grass is surprisingly fine. The lands, which have had hay cut and carried from them, are, I think, more *beautiful* than I ever saw them before. It should, however, always be borne in mind, that this *beautiful* grass is by no means the *best*. An acre of this grass will not make a quarter part so much butter as an acre of rusty-looking pasture, made rusty by the rays of the sun. Sheep on the commons *die* of the *beautiful* grass produced by long-continued rains at this time of the year. Even geese, hardy as they are, die from the same cause. The rain will give quantity, but without sun the quality must be poor at the best. The woods have not shot much this year. The cold winds, the frosts, that we had up to midsummer, prevented the trees from growing much. They are beginning to shoot now; but the wood must be imperfectly ripened.

Meeting at Worth a beggar who claims to be an ex-soldier, Cobbett argues that charity towards such people is misdirected, for they are men "who had become soldiers or sailors because they wished to live without that labour by which other men are content to get their bread."

HORSHAM (SUSSEX),

*Thursday, 31 July*

I left Worth this afternoon about 5 o'clock, and am got here to sleep, intending to set off for Petworth in the morning, with a view of crossing the South Downs and then going into Hampshire through Havant, and along at the southern foot of Portsdown Hill, where I shall see the earliest corn in England. From Worth you come to Crawley along some pretty good land; you then turn to the left and go two miles along the road from the Wen to Brighton; then you turn to the right, and go over six of the worst miles in England, which miles terminate but a few hundred yards before you enter Horsham. The first two of these miserable miles go through the estate of Lord Erskine. It was a bare heath with here and there, in the better parts of it, some scrubby birch. It has been, in part, planted with fir-trees, which are as ugly as the heath was: and, in short, it is a most villainous tract. After quitting it, you enter a forest; but a most miserable one; and this is followed by a large common, now enclosed, cut up, disfigured, spoiled, and the labourers all driven from its skirts. I have seldom travelled over eight miles so well calculated to fill the mind with painful reflections. The ride has, however, this in it: that the ground is pretty much elevated, and enables you to look about you. You see the Surrey hills away to the north; Hindhead and Blackdown to the north-west and west; and the South Downs from the west to the east. The sun was shining upon all these, though it was cloudy where I was. The soil is a poor, miserable, clayey-looking sand, with a sort of sandstone underneath. When you get down into this town, you are again in the Weald of Sussex. I believe that *Weald* meant *clay*, or low, wet, stiff land. This is a very nice, solid, country town. Very clean, as all the towns in Sussex are. The people very clean. The Sussex women are very nice in their dress and in their houses. The men and boys wear smock-frocks more than they do in some counties. When country people do not they always look dirty and comfortless. This has been a pretty good day; but there was a little rain in the afternoon; so that St Swithin keeps on as yet, at any rate. The hay has been spoiled here, in cases where it has been cut; but a great deal of it is not yet cut. I speak of the meadows;

for the clover-hay was all well got in. The grass, which is not cut, is receiving great injury. It is, in fact, in many cases, rotting upon the ground. As to corn, from Crawley to Horsham, there is none worth speaking of. What there is is very good, in general, considering the quality of the soil. It is about as backward as at Worth: the barley and oats green, and the wheat beginning to change colour.

BILLINGSHURST (SUSSEX),

*Friday Morning, 1 Aug.*

This village is 7 miles from Horsham, and I got here to breakfast about seven o'clock. A very pretty village, and a very nice breakfast, in a very neat little parlour of a very decent public-house. The landlady sent her son to get me some cream, and he was just such a chap as I was at his age, and dressed just in the same sort of way, his main garment being a blue smock-frock, faded from wear, and mended with pieces of *new* stuff, and, of course, not faded. The sight of this smock-frock brought to my recollection many things very dear to me. This boy will, I dare say, perform his part at Billingshurst, or at some place not far from it. If accident had not taken me from a similar scene, how many villains and fools, who have been well teased and tormented, would have slept in peace at night, and have fearlessly swaggered about by day!

I was afraid of rain, and got on as fast as I could: that is to say, as fast as my own diligence could help me on; for as to my horse, he is to go only *so fast*. However, I had no rain; and got to Petworth, nine miles further, by about ten o'clock.

PETWORTH (SUSSEX),

*Friday Evening, 1 Aug.*

No rain, until just at sunset, and then very little. I must now look back. From Horsham to within a few miles of Petworth is in the Weald of Sussex; stiff land, small fields, broad hedgerows, and, invariably, thickly planted with fine, growing oak trees. The corn here consists chiefly of wheat and oats. There are some bean-fields, and some few fields of peas; but very little barley along here. The corn is very good all along the Weald; backward; the wheat almost green; the oats quite



green; but, late as it is, I see no blight; and the farmers tell me that there is no blight. There may be yet, however; and, therefore, our government, our "*paternal* government," so anxious to prevent "over production," need not *despair*, as yet, at any rate. The beans in the Weald are not very good. They got lousy before the wet came; and it came rather too late to make them recover what they had lost. What peas there are look well. Along here the wheat, in general, may be fit to cut in about 16 days' time; some sooner; but some later, for some is perfectly green. No swedish turnips all along this country. The white turnips are just up, coming up, or just sown. The farmers are laying out lime upon the wheat fallows, and this is the universal practice of the country. I see very few sheep. There are a good many orchards along in the Weald, and they have some apples this year; but, in general, not many. The apple trees are planted very thickly, and, of course, they are small; but they appear healthy in general; and, in some places, there is a good deal of fruit, even this year. As you approach Petworth, the ground rises and the soil grows lighter. There is a hill which I came over, about two miles from Petworth, whence I had a clear view of the Surrey chalk-hills, Leith Hill, Hindhead, Blackdown, and of the South Downs, towards one part of which I was advancing. The pigs along here are all black, thin-haired, and of precisely the same sort of those that I took from England to Long Island, and with which I pretty well stocked the American States. By the by, the trip which Old Sidmouth and crew gave me to America was attended with some interesting consequences; amongst which were the introducing of the Sussex pigs into the American farm-yards; the introduction of the swedish turnip into the American fields; the introduction of American apple-trees into England; and the introduction of the making, in England, of the straw plat, to supplant the Italian; for had my son not been in America, this last would not have taken place; and in America he would not have been, had it not been for Old Sidmouth and crew. One thing more, and that is of more importance than all the rest, Peel's Bill arose out of the "puff-out" Registers; these arose out of the trip to Long Island; and out of Peel's Bill has arisen the best bothering that the wigs of the boroughmongers ever received, which bothering will end in the destruction of



the boroughmongering. It is curious, and very *useful*, thus to trace events to their causes.

Soon after quitting Billingshurst I crossed the river Arun, which has a canal running alongside of it. At this there are large timber and coal yards, and kilns for lime. This appears to be a grand receiving and distributing place. The river goes down to Arundale, and, together with the valley that it runs through, gives the town its name. This valley, which is very pretty, and which winds about a good deal, is the dale of the Arun: and the town is the town of the Arun-dale. To-day, near a place called Westborough Green, I saw a woman bleaching her home-spun and home-woven linen. I have not seen such a thing before, since I left Long Island. There, and, indeed, all over the American States, north of Maryland, and especially in the New England States, almost the whole of both linen and woollen, used in the country, and a large part of that used in towns, is made in the farm-houses. There are thousands and thousands of families who never use either, except of their own making. All but the weaving is done by the family. There is a loom in the house, and the weaver goes from house to house. I once saw about three thousand farmers, or rather country people, at a horse race in Long Island, and my opinion was, that there were not five hundred who were not dressed in home-spun coats. As to linen, no farmer's family thinks of buying linen. The lords of the loom have taken from the land in England, this part of its due; and hence one cause of the poverty, misery, and pauperism that are becoming so frightful throughout the country.

He regrets the passing of hand-loom weaving—the natural rural occupation of women and girls—and the growth of the large towns where power-weaving is the industry. He claims that his introduction of straw-plaiting will do much to “restore to the land some of the employment of its women and girls.”

Again Cobbett sees unproductive work—a man cracking stones for road-making when he could be better employed by the farmers. Yet they cannot afford to pay sufficient labour to gather the waiting hay-harvest.

Petworth is a nice market town, but solid and clean. The great abundance of *stone* in the land hereabouts has caused a corresponding liberality in paving and wall-building, so that

everything of the building kind has an air of great strength, and produces the agreeable idea of durability. Lord Egremont's house is close to the town, and with its out-buildings, garden walls, and other erections, is, perhaps, nearly as big as the town; though the town is not a very small one. The park is very fine, and consists of a parcel of those hills and dells which Nature formed here when she was in one of her most sportive modes. I have never seen the earth flung about in such a wild way as round about Hindhead and Blackdown; and this park forms a part of this ground. From an elevated part of it, and indeed, from each of many parts of it, you see all around the country to the distance of many miles. From the south-east to the north-west, the hills are so lofty and so near, that they cut the view rather short; but for the rest of the circle, you can see to a very great distance. It is, upon the whole, a most magnificent seat.

But the "old gentry" throughout the country are losing their estates which, with the falling-off of rents, they can no longer maintain. Such are the fruits of the "glorious victories" won over the French at the expense of crippling taxation.

The next extract gives us a sidelight on Cobbett's enviably robust constitution:

SINGLETON (SUSSEX),

*Saturday, 2 Aug.*

Ever since the middle of March, I have been trying remedies for the *hooping-cough*, and have, I believe, tried everything, except riding, wet to the skin, two or three hours amongst the clouds on the South Downs. This remedy is now under trial. There is one thing in favour of this remedy of mine, I shall *know* the effect of it, and that, too, in a short time. It rained a little last night. I got off from Petworth without baiting my horse, thinking that the weather looked suspicious, and that St Swithin meant to treat me to a dose. I had no greatcoat, nor any means of changing my clothes. The *hooping-cough* made me anxious; but I had fixed on going along the South Downs from Donnington-hill down to Lavant, and then to go on the flat to the south foot of Portsdown-hill, and to reach Fareham to-night. Two men, whom I met soon after I set off, assured me that it would not rain. I came on to Donnington, which lies at the foot of that part of the South Downs which I had to go up. Before

I came to this point, I crossed the Arun and its canal again; and here was another place of deposit for timber, lime, coals, and other things. White, in his history of Selborne, mentions a hill, which is one of the Hindhead group, from which two springs (one on each side of the hill) send water into the two seas: the *Atlantic* and the *German Ocean*! This is big talk; but it is a fact. One of the streams becomes the *Arun*, which falls into the Channel; and the other, after winding along amongst the hills and hillocks between Hindhead and Godalming, goes into the river *Wey*, which falls into the Thames at Weybridge.

The village of Donton lies at the foot of one of these great chalk ridges, which are called the South Downs. The ridge, in this place, is, I think, about three-fourths of a mile high, by the high road, which is obliged to go twisting about, in order to get to the top of it. The hill sweeps round from about west-north-west to east-south-east; and, of course, it keeps off all the heavy winds, and especially the south-west winds, before which, in this part of England (and all the south and western part of it), even the oak trees seem as if they would gladly flee; from it shaves them up as completely as you see a quickset hedge shaved by hook or shears. Talking of hedges reminds me of having seen a box-hedge, just as I came out of Petworth, more than twelve feet broad, and about fifteen feet high. I dare say it is several centuries old. I think it is about forty yards long. It is a great curiosity.

The apple trees at Donnington show their gratitude to the hill for its shelter; for I have seldom seen apple trees in England so large, so fine, and, in general, so flourishing. I should like to have, or to see, an orchard of American apples under this hill. The hill, you will observe, does not shade the ground at Donnington. It slopes too much for that. But it affords complete shelter from the mischievous winds. It is very pretty to look down upon this little village as you come winding up the hill.

From this hill I ought to have had a most extensive view. I ought to have seen the Isle of Wight and the sea before me; and to have looked back to Chalk Hill at Reigate, at the foot of which I had left some bonnet-grass bleaching. But, alas! *Saint Swithin* had begun his works for the day, before I got to the top of the hill. Soon after the two turnip-hoers had assured me that there would be no rain, I saw, beginning to poke up

over the South Downs (then right before me), several parcels of those white, curled clouds, that we call *Judges' Wigs*. And they are just like judges' wigs. Not the *parson-like* things which the judges wear when they have to listen to the dull wrangling and duller jests of the lawyers; but those *big* wigs which hang down about their shoulders, when they are about to tell you a little of *their intentions*, and when their very looks say, "*Stand clear!*" These clouds (if rising from the south-west) hold precisely the same language to the great-coatless traveller. Rain is *sure* to follow them. The sun was shining very beautifully when I first saw these judges' wigs rising over the hills. At the sight of them he soon began to hide his face! and before I got to the top of the hill of Danton, the white clouds had become black, had spread themselves all around, and a pretty decent and sturdy rain began to fall. I had resolved to come to this place (Singleton) to breakfast. I quitted the turn-pike road (from Petworth to Chichester) at a village called Upwaltham, about a mile from Donnington Hill; and came down a lane, which led me first to a village called Eastdean; then to another called Westdean, I suppose; and then to this village of Singleton, and here I am on the turnpike road from Midhurst to Chichester. The lane goes along through some of the finest farms in the world. It is impossible for corn land and for agriculture to be finer than these. In cases like mine, you are pestered to death to find out the way to *set out* to get from place to place. The people you have to deal with are innkeepers, ostlers, and post-boys; and they think you mad if you express your wish to avoid turnpike roads; and a great deal more than half mad, if you talk of going, even from necessity, by any other road. They think you a strange fellow if you will not ride six miles on a turnpike road rather than two on any other road. This plague I experienced on this occasion. I wanted to go from Petworth to Havant. My way was through Singleton and Funtington. I had no business at Chichester, which took me too far to the south. Nor at Midhurst, which took me too far to the west. But though I staid all day (after my arrival) at Petworth, and though I slept there, I could get no directions how to set out to come to Singleton, where I am now. I started, therefore, on the Chichester road, trusting to my inquiries of the country people as I came on. By these means I got hither, down a long

valley, on the South Downs, which valley winds and twists about amongst hills, some higher and some lower, forming cross dells, inlets, and ground in such a variety of shapes that it is impossible to describe; and the whole of the ground, hill as well as dell, is fine, most beautiful, corn land, or is covered with trees or underwood. As to St Swithin, I set him at defiance. The road was flinty, and very flinty. I rode a foot pace, and got here wet to the skin. I am very glad I came this road. The corn is all fine; all good; fine crops, and no appearance of blight. The barley extremely fine. The corn not forwarder than in the Weald. No beans here; few oats comparatively; chiefly wheat and barley; but great quantities of swedish turnips, and those very forward. More swedish turnips here upon one single farm than upon all the farms that I saw between the Wen and Petworth. These turnips are, in some places, a foot high, and nearly cover the ground. The farmers are, however, plagued by this St Swithin, who keeps up a continual drip, which prevents the thriving of the turnips and the killing of the weeds. The *orchards* are good here in general. Fine walnut trees, and an abundant crop of walnuts.

Every one speaks well of the local landlords—the Duke of Richmond and Lord Egremont—"I have seen no wretchedness in Sussex."

There is an appearance of comfort about the dwellings of the labourers, all along here, that is very pleasant to behold. The gardens are neat, and full of vegetables of the best kinds. I see very few of "Ireland's lazy root;" and never, in this country, will the people be base enough to lie down and expire from starvation under the operation of the *extreme unction*! Nothing but a *potato-eater* will ever do that. As I came along between Upwaltham and Eastdean, I called to me a young man, who, along with other turnip-hoers, was sitting under the shelter of a hedge at breakfast. He came running to me with his victuals in his hand; and I was glad to see that his food consisted of a good lump of household bread and not a very small piece of *bacon*. I did not envy him his appetite, for I had at that moment a very good one of my own; but I wanted to know the distance I had to go before I should get to a good public-house. In parting with him, I said, "You do get some *bacon* then?" "Oh, yes!



sir," said he, and with an emphasis and a swag of the head which seemed to say, "We *must* and *will* have *that*." I saw, and with great delight, a pig at almost every labourer's house. The houses are good and warm; and the gardens some of the very best that I have seen in England.

Cobbett contrasts their lot with that of the inhabitants of "those corrupt places Great Bedwin and Cricklade" and with that of the "poor creatures" in the industrial north who feed on porridge and work "fourteen hours in a day in a heat of eighty-four degrees."

This is really a soaking day, thus far. I got here at nine o'clock. I stripped off my coat, and put it by the kitchen fire. In a parlour just eight feet square I have another fire, and have dried my shirt on my back. We shall see what this does for a hooping cough. The clouds fly so low as to be seen passing by the sides of even little hills on these downs. The Devil is said to be busy in a *high* wind; but he really appears to be busy now in this south-west wind.

Then follows a lashing, in the true Cobbett style, for absentee clergy—"careless, impudent fellows." Again we have his missionary zeal for reviving rural industries:

At Upwaltham there is a toll gate, and, when the woman opened the door of the house to come and let me through, I saw some *straw plat* lying in a chair. She showed it me; and I found that it was made by her husband, in the evenings, after he came home from work, in order to make him a hat for the harvest. I told her how to get better straw for the purpose; and when I told her she must cut the grass, or the grain, *green*, she said, "Aye, I dare say it is so: and I wonder we never thought of that before; for we sometimes make hats out of rushes, cut green, and dried, and the hats are very durable." This woman ought to have my *Cottage Economy*. She keeps the toll-gate at Upwaltham, which is called Waltham, and which is on the turnpike road from Petworth to Chichester. Now, if any gentleman, who lives at Chichester, will call upon my son, at the office of the *Register* in Fleet Street, and ask for a copy of *Cottage Economy*, to be given to this woman, he will receive the copy, and my thanks, if he will have the goodness to give it to her, and to point to her the Essay on Straw Plat.



## FAREHAM (HANTS),

*Saturday, 2 August*

Here I am in spite of St Swithin!—The truth is, that the saint is like most other oppressors; *rough* him! *rough* him! and he relaxes. After drying myself, and sitting the better part of four hours at Singleton, I started in the rain, boldly setting the saint at defiance, and expecting to have not one dry thread by the time I got to Havant, which is nine miles from Fareham, and four from Cosham. To my most agreeable surprise, the rain ceased before I got by Selsey, I suppose it is called, where Lord Selsey's house and beautiful and fine estate is. On I went, turning off to the right to go to Funtington and Westbourn, and getting to Havant to bait my horse, about four o'clock.

From Lavant (about two miles back from Funtington) the ground begins to be a sea-side flat. The soil is somewhat varied in quality and kind; but, with the exception of an enclosed common between Funtington and Westbourn, it is all good soil. The corn of all kinds good and earlier than further back. They have begun cutting peas here, and, near Lavant, I saw a field of wheat nearly ripe. The swedish turnips very fine, and still earlier than on the South Downs. Prodigious crops of walnuts; but the apples bad along here. The south-west winds have cut them off; and, indeed, how should it be otherwise, if these winds happen to prevail in May, or early in June?

On the new enclosure near Funtington, the wheat and oats are both nearly ripe.

But now I come to one of the great objects of my journey: that is to say, to see the state of the corn along at the south foot and on the south side of Portsdown Hill. It is impossible that there can be, anywhere, a better corn country than this. The hill is eight miles long, and about three-fourths of a mile high, beginning at the road that runs along at the foot of the hill. On the hill-side the corn land goes rather better than half way up; and, on the sea-side, the corn land is about the third (it may be half) a mile wide. Portsdown Hill is very much in the shape of an oblong tin cover to a dish. From Bedhampton, which lies at the eastern end of the hill, to Fareham, which is at the western end of it, you have brought under your eye not less than eight square miles of corn fields, with scarcely a hedge or ditch or any

consequence, and being, on an average, from twenty to forty acres each in extent. The land is excellent. The situation good for manure. The spot the *earliest in the whole kingdom*. Here, if the corn were backward, then the harvest must be backward. We were talking at Reigate of the prospect of a backward harvest. I observed that it was a rule that if no *wheat were cut* under Portsdown Hill, on the hill *fair-day*, 26th July, the harvest must be generally backward. When I made this observation, the fair-day was passed; but I determined in my mind to come and see how the matter stood. When, therefore, I got to the village of Bedhampton, I began to look out pretty sharply. I came on to Wimmering, which is just about the mid-way along the foot of the hill, and there I saw, at a good distance from me, five men reaping in a field of wheat of about 40 acres. I found, upon inquiry, that they began this morning, and that the wheat belongs to Mr Boniface, of Wimmering. Here the first sheaf is cut that is cut in England: that the reader may depend upon. It was never known that the average even of Hampshire was less than ten days behind the average of Portsdown Hill. The corn under the hill is as good as I ever saw it, except in the year 1813. No beans here. No peas. Scarcely any oats. Wheat, barley, and turnips. The swedish turnips not so good as on the South Downs and near Funtington; but the wheat full as good, rather better; and the barley as good as it is possible to be. In looking at these crops, one wonders whence are to come the hands to clear them off.

A very pleasant ride to-day; and the pleasanter for my having set the wet saint at defiance. It is about thirty miles from Petworth to Fareham; and I got in in very good time. I have now come, if I include my *boltings*, for the purpose of looking at farms and woods, a round hundred miles from the Wen to this town of Fareham; and, in the whole of the hundred miles, I have not seen one single wheat rick, though I have come through as fine corn countries as any in England, and by the homesteads of the richest of farmers. Not one single wheat rick have I seen, and not one rick of any sort of corn. I never saw, nor heard of the like of this before; and if I had not witnessed the fact with my own eyes I could not have believed it. There are some farmers who have corn in their barns perhaps; but when there is no *rick* left, there is very little corn in the

hands of farmers. Yet the markets, St Swithin notwithstanding, do not rise. This harvest must be three weeks later than usual; and the last harvest was three weeks earlier than usual. The last crop was begun upon at once, on account of the badness of the wheat of the year before. So that the last crop will have had to give food for thirteen months and a half. And yet the markets do not rise! And yet there are men, farmers, mad enough to think, that they have "got past the bad place," and that things will come about, and are coming about!

## XII

*A Ride through the south-east of Hampshire, back through the south-west of Surrey, along the Weald of Surrey, and then over the Surrey hills down to the Wen*

THE first entry in the Journal of this ride is written at Botley in Hampshire. It was here that Cobbett had lived for many years in a house pleasantly situated on the banks of a branch of the river Hamble. He had also purchased a nearby farm of some 300 acres. Round this he planted a large variety of English and American trees, and reared seedlings for sale. He gained a great reputation as a gardener and kept a representative selection of sporting dogs. The expenses of his trial and imprisonment, followed by the cost of his having to live for a time in America, resulted in an accumulation of debts, so that in 1820 Cobbett became bankrupt. After this financial crisis he settled in Kensington. References to his work at Botley occur in the following extract:

BOTLEY (HAMPSHIRE),

5 August, 1823

I got to Fareham on Saturday night, after having got a soaking on the South Downs on the morning of that day. On the Sunday morning, intending to go and spend the day at Titchfield (about three miles and a half from Fareham), and perceiving, upon looking out of the window, about 5 o'clock in the morning, that it was likely to rain, I got up, struck a bustle, got up the ostler, set off and got to my destined point before 7 o'clock in the morning. And here I experienced the benefits of early rising; for I had scarcely got well and safely under cover, when St Swithin began to pour down again, and he continued to pour during the whole of the day. From Fareham to Titchfield village a large part of the ground is a common enclosed some years ago. It is therefore amongst the worst of the land in the country. Yet, I did not see a bad field of corn along here, and the swedish turnips were, I think, full as fine as any that I saw upon the South Downs. But it is to be observed that this land is in the hands of dead-weight people, and is conveniently

situated for the receiving of manure from Portsmouth. Before I got to my friend's house, I passed by a farm where I expected to find a wheat-rick standing. I did not, however; and this is the strongest possible proof that the stock of corn is gone out of the hands of the farmers. I set out from Titchfield at 7 o'clock in the evening, and had seven miles to go to reach Botley. It rained, but I got myself well furnished forth as a defence against the rain. I had not gone two hundred yards before the rain ceased; so that I was singularly fortunate as to rain this day; and I had now to congratulate myself on the success of the remedy for the hooping-cough which I used the day before on the South Downs; for really, though I had a spell or two of coughing on Saturday morning when I set out from Petworth, I have not had, up to this hour, any spell at all since I got wet upon the South Downs. I got to Botley about nine o'clock, having stopped two or three times to look about me as I went along; for I had, in the first place, to ride, for about three miles of my road, upon a turnpike road of which I was the projector, and, indeed, the maker. In the next place I had to ride, for something better than half a mile of my way, along between fields and coppices that were mine until they came into the hands of the mortgagee, and by the side of cottages of my own building. The only matter of much interest with me was the state of the inhabitants of those cottages. I stopped at two or three places, and made some little inquiries; I rode up to two or three houses in the village of Botley, which I had to pass through, and, just before it was dark, I got to a farm-house close by the church, and what was more, not a great many yards from the dwelling of that delectable creature, the Botley parson, whom, however, I have not seen during my stay at this place.

Botley lies in a valley, the soil of which is a deep and stiff clay. Oak trees grow well; and this year the wheat grows well, as it does upon all the clays that I have seen. I have never seen the wheat better in general, in this part of the country, than it is now. I have, I think, seen it heavier; but never clearer from blight. It is backward compared to the wheat in many other parts; some of it is quite green; but none of it has any appearance of blight. This is not much of a barley country. The oats are good. The beans that I have seen, very indifferent.



Then follows news of his old antagonist the Botley parson and an account of a hoax practised upon him. Cobbett is pleased to find villagers engaged in straw-plaiting:

EASTON (HAMPSHIRE),

*Wednesday Evening, 6 August*

This village of Easton lies at a few miles towards the north-east from Winchester. It is distant from Botley by the way which I came about fifteen or sixteen miles. I came through Durley, where I went to the house of farmer Mears. I was very much pleased with what I saw at Durley, which is about two miles from Botley, and is certainly one of the most obscure villages in this whole kingdom. Mrs Mears, the farmer's wife, had made, of the crested dog's tail grass, a bonnet which she wears herself. I there saw girls platting the straw. They had made, plat of several degrees of fineness; and they sell it to some person or persons are Fareham, who, I suppose, makes it into bonnets. Mrs Mears, who is a very intelligent and clever woman, has two girls at work, each of whom earns per week as much (within a shilling) as her father, who is a labouring man, earns per week. The father has at this time only 7s. per week. These two girls (and not very stout girls) earn six shillings a week each: thus the income of this family is, from seven shillings a week, raised to nineteen shillings a week. I shall suppose that this may in some measure be owing to the generosity of ladies in the neighbourhood, and to their desire to promote this domestic manufacture; but if I suppose that these girls receive double compared to what they will receive for the same quantity of labour when the manufacture becomes more general, is it not a great thing to make the income of the family thirteen shillings a week instead of seven? Very little, indeed, could these poor things have done in the field during the last forty days. And, besides, how clean; how healthful; how everything that one could wish, is this sort of employment! The farmer, who is also a very intelligent person, told me that he should endeavour to introduce the manufacture as a thing to assist the obtaining of employment, in order to lessen the amount of the poor-rates. I think it very likely that this will be done in the parish of Durley.

Such rural occupations Cobbett regards as important because they will assist in bettering the lot of the labouring classes. They

will "put paupers in the way of ceasing to be paupers," and he feels proud of his part in introducing such work.

From Durley I came on in company with farmer Mears through Upham. This Upham is the place where Young, who wrote that bombastical stuff, called *Night Thoughts*, was once the parson, and where, I believe, he was born. Away to the right of Upham lies the little town of Bishop's Waltham, whither I wished to go very much, but it was too late in the day. From Upham we came on upon the high land, called Black Down. This has nothing to do with that Black-down Hill, spoken of in my last ride. We are here getting up upon the chalk hills, which stretch away towards Winchester. The soil here is a poor blackish stuff, with little white stones in it, upon a bed of chalk. It was a down not many years ago. The madness and greediness of the days of paper-money led to the breaking of it up. The corn upon it is miserable, but as good as can be expected upon such land.

At the end of this tract, we come to a spot called Whiteflood, and here we cross the old turnpike-road which leads from Winchester to Gosport through Bishop's Waltham. Whiteflood is at the foot of the first of a series of hills over which you come to get to the top of that lofty ridge called Morning Hill. The farmer came to the top of the first hill along with me, and he was just about to turn back, when I, looking away to the left, down a valley which stretched across the other side of the down, observed a rather singular appearance, and said to the farmer, "What is that coming up that valley? is it smoke, or is it a cloud?" The day had been very fine hitherto; the sun was shining very bright where we were. The farmer answered, "Oh, it's smoke; it comes from Ouselberry, which is down in that bottom behind those trees." So saying, we bid each other good day; he went back, and I went on. Before I had got a hundred and fifty yards from him, the cloud which he had taken for the Ouselberry smoke, came upon the hill and wet me to the skin. He was not far from the house at Whiteflood; but I am sure that he could not entirely escape it. It is curious to observe how the clouds sail about in the hilly countries, and particularly, I think, amongst the chalk-hills. I have never observed the like amongst the sand-hills, or amongst rocks.

He crosses some poor land which, in the times of high prices, was enclosed for wheat-growing, for which it was entirely unsuitable. As grassland it was of some use; now it is derelict. He has a good word for the Duke of Buckingham's estate.

From the top of this high land called *Morning Hill*, and the real name of which is *Magdalen Hill*, from a chapel which once stood there dedicated to Mary Magdalen; from the top of this land you have a view of a circle which is upon an average about seventy miles in diameter; and I believe in no one place so little as fifty miles in diameter. You see the Isle of Wight in one direction, and in the opposite direction you see the high lands in Berkshire. It is not a pleasant view, however. The fertile spots are all too far from you. Descending from this hill, you cross the turnpike-road (about two miles from Winchester), leading from Winchester to London through Alresford and Farnham. As soon as you cross the road, you enter the estate of the descendant of Rollo, Duke of Buckingham, which estate is in the parish of Avington. In this place the duke has a farm, not very good land. It is in his own hands. The corn is indifferent, except the barley, which is everywhere good. You come a full mile from the roadside down through this farm, to the duke's mansion-house at Avington, and to the little village of that name, both of them beautifully situated, amidst fine and lofty trees, fine meadows, and streams of clear water. On this farm of the duke I saw (in a little close by the farm-house) several hens in coops with broods of pheasants instead of chickens. It seems that a gamekeeper lives in the farm-house, and I dare say the duke thinks much more of the pheasants than of the corn. To be very solicitous to preserve what has been raised with so much care and at so much expense, is by no means unnatural; but then there is a measure to be observed here; and that measure was certainly outstretched in the case of Mr Deller. I here saw, at this gamekeeping farm-house, what I had not seen since my departure from the Wen; namely, a wheat-rick! Hard, indeed, would it have been if a Plantagenet, turned farmer, had not a wheat-rick in his hands. This rick contains, I should think, what they call in Hampshire ten loads of wheat, that is to say, fifty quarters, or four hundred bushels. And this is the only rick, not only of wheat, but of any corn whatever that I have seen since I left London. The turnips, upon this farm, are by

no means good; but I was in some measure compensated for the bad turnips by the sight of the duke's turnip-hoers, about a dozen females, amongst whom there were several very pretty girls, and they were as merry as larks. There had been a shower that had brought them into a sort of huddle on the roadside. When I came up to them, they all fixed their eyes upon me, and upon my smiling, they bursted out into laughter. I observed to them that the Duke of Buckingham was a very happy man to have such turnip-hoers, and really they seemed happier and better off than any work-people that I saw in the fields all the way from London to this spot. It is curious enough, but I have always observed that the women along this part of the country are usually tall. These girls were all tall, straight, fair, round-faced, excellent complexion, and uncommonly gay. They were well dressed, too, and I observed the same of all the men that I saw down at Avington. This could not be the case if the duke were a cruel or hard master; and this is an act of justice due from me to the descendant of Rollo. It is in the house of Mr Deller that I make these notes, but as it is *injustice* that we dislike, I must do Rollo justice; and I must again say that the good looks and happy faces of his turnip-hoers spoke much more in his praise than could have been spoken by fifty lawyers, like that Storks who was employed, the other day, to plead against the editor of the *Bucks Chronicle*, for publishing an account of the selling-up of farmer Smith, of Ashendon, in that county. I came through the duke's park to come to Easton, which is the next village below Avington. A very pretty park. The house is quite in the bottom; it can be seen in no direction from a distance greater than that of four or five hundred yards. The river Itchen, which rises near Alresford, which runs down through Winchester to Southampton, goes down the middle of this valley, and waters all its immense quantity of meadows. The duke's house stands not far from the river itself. A stream of water is brought from the river to feed a pond before the house. There are several avenues of trees which are very beautiful, and some of which give complete shelter to the kitchen garden, which has, besides, extraordinarily high walls. Never was a greater contrast than that presented by this place and the place of Lord Egremont. The latter is all loftiness. Everything is high about it; it has extensive views in all directions.

It sees and can be seen by all the country around. If I had the ousting of one of these noblemen, I certainly, however, would oust the duke, who, I dare say, will by no means be desirous of seeing arise the occasion of putting the sincerity of the compliment to the test. The village of Easton is, like that of Avington, close by the waterside. The meadows are the attraction; and, indeed, it is the meadows that have caused the villages to exist.

There is now a diversion of some length in which Cobbett attacks justices of the peace. He speaks of a law case between a Mr Deller and the Duke of Buckingham over the matter of game preservation. He objects to the action of the local justices and goes on to speak of the county treasurer for Hampshire who is in arrears with county monies. He blames the justices for having passed the annual accounts. He makes a satirical reference to the so-called "disinterestedness" of the J.P.'s who are reputed to serve their country for nothing.

I came through Alresford about eight o'clock, having loitered a good deal in coming up the valley. After quitting Alresford you come (on the road towards Alton) to the village of Bishop's Sutton; and then to a place called Ropley Dean, where there is a house or two. Just before you come to Ropley Dean, you see the beginning of the Valley of Itchen. The *Itchen* river falls into the salt water at Southampton. It rises, or rather has its first rise, just by the roadside at Ropley Dean, which is at the foot of that very high land which lies between Alresford and Alton. All along by the Itchen river, up to its very source, there are meadows; and this vale of meadows, which is about twenty-five miles in length, and is, in some places, a mile wide, is, at the point of which I am now speaking, only about twice as wide as my horse is long! This vale of Itchen is worthy of particular attention. There are few spots in England more fertile or more pleasant; and none, I believe, more healthy. Following the bed of the river, or rather, the middle of the vale, it is about five-and-twenty miles in length, from Ropley Dean to the village of South Stoneham, which is just above Southampton. The average width of the meadows is, I should think, a hundred rods at the least; and if I am right in this conjecture, the vale contains about five thousand acres of meadows, large part of which is regularly watered. The sides of the vale are, until you come down to within about six or eight miles of Southampton, hills



or rising grounds of chalk, covered more or less thickly with loam. Where the hills rise up very steeply from the valley, the fertility of the corn-lands is not so great; but for a considerable part of the way, the corn-lands are excellent, and the farm-houses, to which those lands belong, are, for the far greater part, under covert of the hills on the edge of the valley. Soon after the rising of the stream, it forms itself into some capital ponds at Alresford. These, doubtless, were augmented by art, in order to supply Winchester with fish. The fertility of this vale, and of the surrounding country, is best proved by the fact that, besides the town of Alresford and that of Southampton, there are seventeen villages, each having its parish church, upon its borders. When we consider these things we are not surprised that a spot situated about half way down this vale should have been chosen for the building of a city, or that that city should have been for a great number of years a place of residence for the kings of England.

Winchester, which is at present a mere nothing to what it once was, stands across the vale at a place where the vale is made very narrow by the jutting forward of two immense hills. From the point where the river passes through the city, you go, whether eastward or westward, a full mile up a very steep hill all the way. The city is, of course, in one of the deepest holes that can be imagined. It never could have been thought of as a place to be defended since the discovery of gunpowder; and, indeed, one would think that very considerable annoyance might be given to the inhabitants even by the flinging of the flint-stones from the hills down into the city.

At Ropley Dean, before I mounted the hill to come on towards Rotherham Park, I baited my horse. Here the ground is precisely like that at Ashmansworth on the borders of Berkshire, which, indeed, I could see from the ground of which I am now speaking. In coming up the hill, I had the house and farm of Mr Duthy to my right. Seeing some very fine swedish turnips, I naturally expected that they belonged to this gentleman who is secretary of the Agricultural Society of Hampshire; but I found that they belonged to a farmer Mayhew. The soil is, along upon this high land, a deep loam, bordering on a clay, red in colour, and pretty full of large, rough, yellow-looking stones, very much like some of the land in Huntingdonshire; but here

is a bed of chalk under this. Everything is backward here. The wheat is perfectly green in most places; but it is everywhere pretty good. I have observed, all the way along, that the wheat is good upon the stiff, strong land. It is so here; but it is very backward. The greater part of it is full three weeks behind the wheat under Portsdown Hill. But few farm-houses come within my sight along here; but in one of them there was a wheat-rick, which is the third I have seen since I quitted the Wen. In descending from this high ground, in order to reach the village of East Tisted, which lies on the turnpike-road from the Wen to Gosport through Alton, I had to cross Rotherham Park. On the right of the park, on a bank of land facing the north-east, I saw a very pretty farm-house, having everything in excellent order, with fine corn-fields about it, and with a wheat-rick standing in the yard. This farm, as I afterwards found, belongs to the owner of Rotherham Park, who is also the owner of East Tisted, who has recently built a new house in the park, who has quite metamorphosed the village of Tisted, within these eight years, who has, indeed, really and truly improved the whole country just round about here, whose name is Scot, well known as a brickmaker at North End, Fulham, and who has, in Hampshire, supplanted a Norman of the name of Powlet.

Thus does high taxation impoverish the owners of estates, putting their money into the hands of "tax-eaters," who in turn enrich the brick-maker by building themselves new houses! Cobbett then visits the village made famous in Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne*, and takes careful measurements of its ancient yew-tree:

At Tisted I crossed the turnpike-road before mentioned, and entered a lane which, at the end of about four miles, brought me to this village of Selborne. My readers will recollect that I mentioned this Selborne when I was giving an account of Hawkley Hanger, last fall. I was desirous of seeing this village, about which I have read in the book of Mr White, and which a reader has been so good as to send me. From Tisted I came generally up hill till I got within half a mile of this village, when, all of a sudden, I came to the edge of a hill, looked down over all the larger vale of which the little vale of this village makes a

part. Here Hindhead and Black Down Hill came full in my view. When I was crossing the forest in Sussex, going from Worth to Horsham, these two great hills lay to my west and north-west. To-day I am got just on the opposite side of them, and see them, of course, towards the east and the south-east, while Leith Hill lies away towards the north-east. This hill, from which you descend down into Selborne, is very lofty; but, indeed, we are here amongst some of the highest hills in the island, and amongst the sources of rivers. The hill over which I have come this morning sends the Itchen river forth from one side of it, and the river Wey, which rises near Alton, from the opposite side of it. Hindhead which lies before me, sends, as I observed upon a former occasion, the Arun forth towards the south and a stream forth towards the north, which meets the river Wey, somewhere above Godalming. I am told that the springs of these two streams rise in the Hill of Hindhead, or rather, on one side of the hill, at not many yards from each other. The village of Selborne is precisely what it is described by Mr White. A straggling irregular street, bearing all the marks of great antiquity, and showing, from its lanes and its vicinage generally, that it was once a very considerable place. I went to look at the spot where Mr White supposes the convent formerly stood. It is very beautiful. Nothing can surpass in beauty these dells and hillocks and hangers, which last are so steep that it is impossible to ascend them, except by means of a serpentine path. I found here deep hollow ways, with beds and sides of solid white stone; but not quite so white and so solid, I think, as the stone which I found in the roads at Hawkey. The churchyard of Selborne is most beautifully situated. The land is good, all about it. The trees are luxuriant and prone to be lofty and large. I measured the yew-tree in the churchyard, and found the trunk to be, according to my measurement, twenty-three feet, eight inches, in circumference. The trunk is very short, as is generally the case with yew-trees; but the head spreads to a very great extent, and the whole tree, though probably several centuries old, appears to be in perfect health. Here are several hop-plantations in and about this village; but, for this once, the prayers of the over-production men will be granted, and the devil of any hops there will be. The bines are scarcely got up the poles; the bines and the leaves are black,

nearly, as soot; full as black as a sooty bag or dingy coal-sack, and covered with lice. I really shrug up my shoulders thinking of the beasts. Very different from such is my landlady here at Selborne, who, while I am writing my notes, is getting me a rasher of bacon, and has already covered the table with a nice clean cloth. I have never seen such quantities of grapes upon any vines as I see upon the vines in this village, badly pruned as all the vines have been. To be sure, this is a year for grapes, such, I believe, as has been seldom known in England, and the cause is, the perfect ripening of the wood by the last beautiful summer. I am afraid, however, that the grapes come in vain; for this summer has been so cold, and is now so wet, that we can hardly expect grapes, which are not under glass, to ripen.

The failure of the hops, owing to the blight of the hop-fly, leads Cobbett to attack the hop duty and the gambling speculation that it encourages.

Looking back over the road that I have come to-day, and perceiving the direction of the road going from this village in another direction, I perceive that this is a very direct road from Winchester to Farnham. The road, too, appears to have been, from ancient times, sufficiently wide; and when the Bishop of Winchester selected this beautiful spot whereon to erect a monastery, I dare say the roads along here were some of the best in the country.

THURSLEY (SURREY),

*Thursday, 7 August*

I got a boy at Selborne to show me along the lanes out into Woolmer Forest on my way to Headley. The lanes were very deep; the wet *malme* just about the colour of rye-meal mixed up with water, and just about as clammy, came, in many places, very nearly up to my horse's belly. There was this comfort, however, that I was sure that there was a bottom, which is by no means the case when you are among clays or quick-sands. After going through these lanes, and along between some fir-plantations, I came out upon Woolmer Forest, and, to my great satisfaction, soon found myself on the side of those identical plantations, which have been made under the orders of the smooth Mr Huskisson, and which I noticed last year in my

ride from Hambledon to this place. These plantations are of fir, or, at least, I could see nothing else, and they never can be of any more use to the nation than the sprigs of heath which cover the rest of the forest. Is there nobody to inquire what becomes of the income of the crown lands? No, and there never will be, until the whole system be changed. I have seldom ridden on pleasanter ground than that which I found between Woolmer Forest and this beautiful village of Thursley. The day has been fine, too; notwithstanding I saw the judges' terrific wigs as I came up upon the turnpike-road from the village of Itchen. I had but one little scud during the day: just enough for St Swithin to swear by; but when I was upon the hills, I saw some showers going about the country. From Selborne, I had first to come to Headley, about five miles. I came to the identical public-house where I took my blind guide last year, who took me such a dance to the southward, and led me up to the top of Hindhead at last. I had no business there. My route was through a sort of hamlet called Churt, which lies along on the side and towards the foot of the north of Hindhead, on which side, also, lies the village of Thursley. A line is hardly more straight than is the road from Headley to Thursley; and a prettier ride I never had in the course of my life. It was not the less interesting from the circumstance of its giving me all the way a full view of Crooksbury Hill, the grand scene of my exploits when I was a taker of the nests of crows and magpies.

At Churt I had, upon my left, three hills out upon the common, called the *Devil's Jumps*. The Unitarians will not believe in the Trinity, because they cannot account for it. Will they come here to Churt, go and look at these "Devil's Jumps," and account to me for the placing of these three hills, in the shape of three rather squat sugar-loaves, along in a line upon this heath, or the placing of a rock-stone upon the top of one of them as big as a church tower? For my part, I cannot account for this placing of these hills. That they should have been formed by mere chance is hardly to be believed. How could waters rolling about have formed such hills? How could such hills have bubbled up from beneath? But, in short, it is all wonderful alike: the stripes of loam running down through the chalk-hills; the circular parcels of loam in the midst of chalk-hills; the lines of flint running parallel with each other horizontally along the



chalk-hills; the flints placed in circles as true as a hair in the chalk-hills; the layers of stone at the bottom of hills of loam; the chalk first soft, then some miles further on becoming chalk-stone; then, after another distance, becoming burr-stone, as they call it; and at last, becoming hard white-stone, fit for any buildings; the sand-stone at Hindhead becoming harder and harder till it becomes very nearly iron in Herefordshire, and quite iron in Wales; but, indeed, they once dug iron out of this very Hindhead. The clouds, coming and settling upon the hills, sinking down and creeping along, at last coming out again in springs, and those becoming rivers. Why, it is all equally wonderful, and as to not believing in this or that, because the thing cannot be proved by logical deduction, why is any man to believe in the existence of a God any more than he is to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity? For my part, I think the "Devil's Jumps," as the people here call them, full as wonderful and no more wonderful than hundreds and hundreds of other wonderful things. It is a strange taste which our ancestors had to ascribe no inconsiderable part of these wonders of nature to the Devil. Not far from the Devil's Jumps is that singular place which resembles a sugar-loaf inverted, hollowed out and an outside rim only left. This is called the "*Devil's Punch Bowl*;" and it is very well known in Wiltshire that the forming, or, perhaps, it is the breaking up of Stonehenge is ascribed to the Devil, and that the mark of one of his feet is now said to be seen in one of the stones.

I got to Thursley about sunset, and without experiencing any inconvenience from the wet. I have mentioned the state of the corn as far as Selborne. On this side of that village I find it much forwarder than I found it between Selborne and Ropley Dean. I am here got into some of the very best barley-land in the kingdom; a fine, buttery, stoneless loam, upon a bottom of sand or sand-stone. Finer barley and turnip-land it is impossible to see. All the corn is good here. The wheat not a heavy crop; but not a light one; and the barley all the way along from Headley to this place as fine, if not finer, than I ever saw it in my life. Indeed I have not seen a bad field of barley since I left the Wen. The corn is not so forward here as under Portsdown Hill; but some farmers intend to begin reaping wheat in a few days.

Cobbett then arraigns the corn-merchants who send round their 'gaugers' to clip off ears of wheat so that they can make an estimate of the crop and speculate with profit. We find a connexion with his life in America :

I am very happy to hear that that beautiful little bird, the American partridge, has been introduced with success to this neighbourhood, by Mr Leech at Lea. I am told that they have been heard whistling this summer; that they have been frequently seen, and that there is no doubt that they have broods of young ones. I tried several times to import some of these birds; but I always lost them, by some means or other, before the time arrived for turning them out. They are a beautiful little partridge, and extremely interesting in all their manners. Some persons call them *quail*. If any one will take a quail and compare it with one of these birds, he will see that they cannot be of the same sort. In my *Year's Residence in America*, I have, I think, clearly proved that these birds are partridges, and not quails. In the United States, north of New Jersey, they are called quail: south and south-west of New Jersey they are called partridges. They have been called quail solely on account of their size; for they have none of the manners of quail belonging to them. Quails assemble in flocks like larks, starlings or rooks. Partridges keep in distinct coveys; that is to say, the brood lives distinct from all other broods until the ensuing spring, when it forms itself into pairs and separates. Nothing can be a distinction more clear than this. Our own partridges stick to the same spot from the time that they are hatched to the time that they pair off, and these American partridges do the same. Quails, like larks, get together in flocks at the approach of winter, and move about according to the season, to a greater or less distance from the place where they were bred. These, therefore, which have been brought to Thursley, are partridges; and if they be suffered to live quietly for a season or two, they will stock the whole of that part of the country, where the delightful intermixture of corn-fields, coppices, heaths, furze-fields, ponds and rivulets, is singularly favourable to their increase.

The prevalence of weed among the turnips in this wet season and the amount of labour involved in hoeing point, Cobbett argues,

to the advantages of his plan of sowing on ridges four feet apart. The sight of one of the semaphores on the top of a 'telegraph hill' is a red rag that starts him off on a violent tirade against the pensioners and 'dead-weight' people who are "maintained at the public charge."

Bidding the *Semaphore* good-bye, I came along by the church at Hambledon, and then crossed a little common and the turnpike-road, from London to Chichester through Godalming and Petworth; not Midhurst, as before. The turnpike-road here is one of the best that ever I saw. It is like the road upon Horley Common, near Worth, and like that between Godstone and East Grinstead; and the cause of this is, that it is made of precisely the same sort of stone, which, they tell me, is brought, in some cases, even from Blackdown Hill, which cannot be less, I should think, than twelve miles distant. This stone is brought in great lumps, and then cracked into little pieces. The next village I came to after Hambledon was Hascomb, famous for its *beech*, insomuch that it is called *Hascomb Beech*.

There are two lofty hills here, between which you go out of the sandy country down into the Weald. Here are hills of all heights and forms. Whether they came in consequence of a boiling of the earth, I know not; but, in form, they very much resemble the bubbles upon the top of the water of a pot which is violently boiling. The soil is a beautiful loam upon a bed of sand. Springs start here and there at the feet of the hills; and little rivulets pour away in all directions. The roads are difficult merely on account of their extreme unevenness; the bottom is everywhere sound, and everything that meets the eye is beautiful; trees, coppices, cornfields, meadows; and then the distant views in every direction. From one spot I saw this morning Hindhead, Blackdown Hill, Lord Egremont's house and park at Petworth, Donnington Hill, over which I went to go on the South Downs, the South Downs near Lewes; the forest at Worth, Turner's Hill, and then all the way round into Kent and back to the Surrey Hills at Godstone. From Hascomb I began to descend into the low country. I had Leith Hill before me; but my plan was, not to go over it or any part of it, but to go along below it in the real Weald of Surrey. A little way back from Hascomb, I had seen a *field of carrots*; and now I was descending into a country where, strictly speaking, only

three things will grow well—grass, wheat, and oak trees. At Goose Green, I crossed a turnpike-road leading from Guildford to Horsham and Arundel. I next come, after crossing a canal, to a common called Smithwood Common. Leith Hill was full in front of me, but I turned away to the right, and went through the lanes to come to Ewhurst, leaving Crawley to my right. Before I got to Ewhurst, I crossed another turnpike-road, leading from Guildford to Horsham, and going on to Worthing or some of those towns.

At Ewhurst, which is a very pretty village, and the church of which is most delightfully situated, I treated my horse to some oats, and myself to a rasher of bacon. I had now to come, according to my project, round among the lanes at about a couple of miles distance from the foot of Leith Hill, in order to get first to Ockley, then to Holmwood, and then to Reigate. From Ewhurst the first three miles was the deepest clay that I ever saw, to the best of my recollection. I was warned of the difficulty of getting along; but I was not to be frightened at the sound of clay. Wagons, too, had been dragged along the lanes by some means or another; and where a wagon-horse could go, my horse could go. It took me, however, a good hour and a half to get along these three miles. Now, mind, this is the real *weald*, where the clay is *bottomless*; where there is no stone of any sort underneath, as at Worth and all along from Crawley to Billingshurst through Horsham. This clayey land is fed with water soaking from the sand-hills; and in this particular place from the immense hill of Leith. All along here the oak-woods are beautiful. I saw scores of acres by the roadside, where the young oaks stood as regularly as if they had been planted. The orchards are not bad along here, and, perhaps, they are a good deal indebted to the shelter they receive. The wheat very good, all through the *weald*, but backward.

At Ockley I passed the house of a Mr Steer, who has a great quantity of hay-land, which is very pretty. Here I came along the turnpike-road that leads from Dorking to Horsham. When I got within about two or three miles of Dorking, I turned off to the right, came across the Holmwood, into the lanes leading down to Gadbrook Common, which has of late years been inclosed. It is all clay here; but, in the whole of my ride, I have not seen much finer fields of wheat than I saw here. Out

of these lanes I turned up to "Betchworth" (I believe it is), and from Betchworth came along a chalk hill to my left and the sand hills to my right, till I got to this place.

Returning to London, he sums up the results of his survey—the effectiveness of his whooping-cough cure, turnip growing, the state of the crops—and concludes with a reply to "a tissue of downright lies" appearing in Bell's *Weekly Messenger* and directed against Cobbett's views on the price of wheat.

WEN,

*Sunday, 10 August*

I stayed at Reigate yesterday, and came to the Wen to-day, every step of the way in a rain; as good a soaking as any devotee of St Swithin every underwent for his sake. I promised that I would give an account of the effect which the soaking on the South Downs, on Saturday the 2nd instant, had upon the whooping-cough. I do not recommend the remedy to others; but this I will say, that I had a spell of the whooping-cough, the day before I got that soaking, and that I have not had a single spell since; though I have slept in several different beds, and got a second soaking in going from Botley to Easton. The truth is, I believe, that rain upon the South Downs, or at any place near the sea, is by no means the same thing with rain in the interior. No man ever catches cold from getting wet with sea water; and, indeed, I have never known an instance of a man catching cold at sea. The air upon the South Downs is saltish, I dare say; and the clouds may bring something a little partaking of the nature of sea water.

At Thursley I left the turnip-hoers poking and pulling and muddling about the weeds, and wholly incapable, after all, of putting the turnips in anything like the state in which they ought to be. The weeds that had been hoed up twice, were growing again, and it was the same with the turnips that had been hoed up. In leaving Reigate this morning, it was with great pleasure that I saw a field of swedish turnips, drilled upon ridges at about four feet distance, the whole field as clean as the cleanest of garden ground. The turnips standing at equal distances in the row, and having the appearance of being, in every respect, in a prosperous state. I should not be afraid to bet that these turnips, thus standing in rows at nearly four feet



distance, will be a crop twice as large as any in the parish of Thursley, though there is, I imagine, some of the finest turnip-land in the kingdom. It seems strange, that men are not to be convinced of the advantage of the row-culture for turnips. They will insist upon believing that there is some *ground lost*. They will also insist upon believing that the row-culture is the most expensive. How can there be ground lost if the crop be larger? And as to the expense, take one year with another, the broadcast method must be twice as expensive as the other. Wet as it has been to-day, I took time to look well about me as I came along. The wheat, even in this ragamuffin part of the country, is good, with the exception of one piece, which lies on your left hand as you come down from Banstead Down. It is very good at Banstead itself, though that is a country sufficiently poor. Just on the other side of Sutton there is a little good land, and in a place or two I thought I saw the wheat a little blighted. A labouring man told me that it was where the heaps of dung had been laid. The barley here is most beautiful, as, indeed, it is all over the country.

Between Sutton and the Wen there is, in fact, little besides houses, gardens, grass plats and other matters. But, in a dell, which the turnpike-road crosses about a mile on this side of Sutton, there are two fields of as stiff land, I think, as I ever saw in my life. In summer time this land bakes so hard that they cannot plough it unless it be wet. When you have ploughed it, and the sun comes again, it bakes again. One of these fields had been thus ploughed and cross-ploughed in the month of June, and I saw the ground when it was lying in lumps of the size of portmanteaus, and not very small ones either. It would have been impossible to reduce this ground to small particles, except by the means of sledge hammers. The two fields, to which I alluded just now, are alongside of this ploughed field, and they are now in wheat. The heavy rain of to-day, aided by the south-west wind, made the wheat bend pretty nearly to lying down; but you shall rarely see two finer fields of wheat. It is red wheat; a coarsish kind, and the straw stout and strong; but the ears are long, broad and full; and I did not perceive anything approaching towards a speck in the straw. Such land as this, such very stiff land, seldom carries a very large crop; but I should think that these fields would exceed four quarters to an acre;

and the wheat is by no means so backward as it is in some places. There is no corn, that I recollect, from the spot just spoken of, to almost the street of Kensington. I came up by Earl's Court, where there is, amongst the market gardens, a field of wheat. One would suppose that this must be the finest wheat in the world. By no means. It rained hard, to be sure, and I had not much time for being particular in my survey; but this field appears to me to have some blight in it; and as to crop, whether of corn or of straw, it is nothing to compare to the general run of the wheat in the wealds of Sussex or of Surrey; what, then, is it, if compared with the wheat on the South Downs, under Portsdown Hill, on the sea-flats at Havant and at Titchfield, and along on the banks of the Itchen!

Thus I have concluded this "rural ride," from the Wen and back again to the Wen, being, taking in all the turnings and windings, as near as can be, two hundred miles in length. My objects were to ascertain the state of the crops, both of hops and of corn. The hop-affair is soon settled, for there will be no hops. As to the corn, my remark is this: that on all the clays, on all the stiff lands upon the chalk; on all the rich lands, indeed, but more especially on all the stiff lands, the wheat is as good as I recollect ever to have seen it, and has as much straw. On all the light lands and poor lands, the wheat is thin, and, though not short, by no means good. The oats are pretty good almost everywhere; and I have not seen a bad field of barley during the whole of my ride; though there is no species of soil in England, except that of the fens, over which I have not passed. The state of the farmers is much worse than it was last year, notwithstanding the ridiculous falsehoods of the London newspapers, and the more ridiculous delusion of the jolterheads. In numerous instances the farmers, who continue in their farms, have ceased to farm for themselves, and merely hold the land for the landlords. The delusion caused by the rise of the price of corn has pretty nearly vanished already; and if St Swithin would but get out of the way with his drippings for about a month, this delusion would disappear, never to return.

### XIII

#### *A Ride through the north-east part of Sussex, and all across Kent, from the Weald of Sussex, to Dover*

COBBETT gives us some vivid impressions of this interesting piece of England. But they tend to be glimpses only, for there is much that rouses his passions and we have some typical outbursts against the game laws, Church of England clergy, "sinecure placemen," Methodist parsons, defence works, and so on. He rides along, quietly observing the countryside, when suddenly his eye lights on one of his abominations and he is off at once, often in a violent flood of invective, much of it prejudiced and unjust, but all of it honest and entertaining. The personal inconvenience that he felt most keenly was a difficulty in obtaining the breakfast rasher of bacon!

WORTH (SUSSEX),

*Friday, 29 August, 1823*

I have so often described the soil and other matters appertaining to the country between the Wen and this place, that my readers will rejoice at being spared the repetition here. As to the harvest, however, I find that they were deluged here on Tuesday last, though we got but little, comparatively, at Kensington. Between Mitcham and Sutton they were making wheat-ricks. The corn has not been injured here worth notice. Now and then an ear in the butts *grown*; and grown wheat is a sad thing! You may almost as well be without wheat altogether. However, very little harm has been done here as yet.

After meeting a man who has suffered from the operation of the game laws, Cobbett again urges their repeal, arguing that their severity is at the root of acts of violence against gamekeepers.

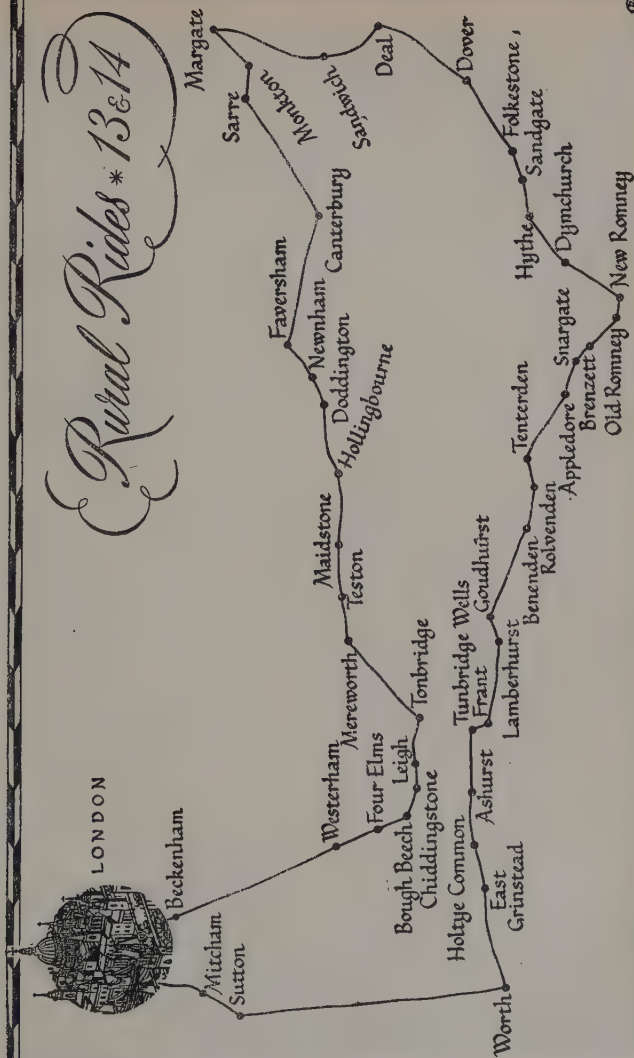
There is still plenty of rain to enable him to continue his original cure for the whooping-cough:

TONBRIDGE WELLS (KENT),

*Saturday, 30 August*

I came from Worth about seven this morning, passed through East Grinstead, over Holthigh Common, through Ashurst, and

# Rural Rides \* 13 & 14



thence to this place. The morning was very fine, and I left them at Worth making a wheat-rick. There was no show for rain till about one o'clock, as I was approaching Ashurst. The shattering that came at first I thought nothing of; but the clouds soon grew up all round, and the rain set in for the afternoon. The buildings at Ashurst (which is the first parish in Kent on quitting Sussex) are a mill, an alehouse, a church, and about six or seven other houses. I stopped at the alehouse to bait my horse; and, for want of bacon, was compelled to put up with bread and cheese for myself. I waited in vain for the rain to cease or to slacken, and the *want of bacon* made me fear as to a *bed*. So, about five o'clock, I, without greatcoat, got upon my horse, and came to this place, just as fast and no faster than if it had been fine weather. A very fine soaking! If the South Downs have left any little remnant of the hooping cough, *this* will take it away to be sure. I made not the least haste to get out of the rain, I stopped, here and there, as usual, and asked questions about the corn, the hops, and other things. But the moment I got in I got a good fire, and set about the work of drying in good earnest. It costing me nothing for drink, I can afford to have plenty of fire. I have not been in the house an hour; and all my clothes are now as dry as if they had never been wet. It is not getting wet that hurts you, if you keep moving while you are wet. It is the suffering of yourself to be *inactive*, while the wet clothes are on your back.

The country that I have come over to-day is a very pretty one. The soil is a pale yellow loam, looking like brick earth, but rather sandy; but the bottom is a softish stone. Now and then, where you go through hollow ways (as at East Grinstead) the sides are solid rock. And, indeed, the rocks sometimes (on the sides of hills) show themselves above ground, and, mixed amongst the woods, make very interesting objects. On the road from the Wen to Brighton, through Godstone and over Turner's Hill, and which road I crossed this morning in coming from Worth to East Grinstead; on that road, which goes through Lindfield, and which is by far the pleasantest coach-road from the Wen to Brighton; on the side of this road, on which coaches now go from the Wen to Brighton, there is a long chain of rocks, or, rather, rocky hills, with trees growing amongst the rocks, or apparently out of them, as they do in the woods near Ross in



Herefordshire, and as they do in the Blue Mountains in America, where you can see no earth at all; where all seems rock, and yet where the trees grow most beautifully. At the place, of which I am now speaking, that is to say, by the side of this pleasant road to Brighton, and between Turner's Hill and Lindfield, there is a rock, which they call "*Big-upon-Little*;" that is to say, a rock upon another, having nothing else to rest upon, and the top one being longer and wider than the top of the one it lies on. This big rock is no trifling concern, being as big, perhaps, as a not very small house. How, then, *came* this big upon little? What lifted up the big? It balances itself naturally enough; but what tossed it up? I do not like to *pay* a parson for teaching me, while I have "*God's own word*" to teach me; but if any parson will tell me *how* big *came* upon little, I do not know that I shall grudge him a trifle. And if he cannot tell me this: if he say, All that we have to do is to *admire* and *adore*; then I tell him, that I can *admire* and *adore* without his *aid*, and that I will keep my money in my pocket.

To return to the soil of this country, it is such a loam as I have described with this stone beneath; sometimes the top soil is lighter and sometimes heavier; sometimes the stone is harder and sometimes softer; but this is the general character of it all the way from Worth to Tonbridge Wells. This land is what may be called the *middle kind*. The wheat crop about 20 to 24 bushels to an acre, on an average of years. The grass fields not bad, and all the fields will grow grass; I mean make upland meadows. The woods good, though not of the finest. The land seems to be about thus divided: three-tenths *woods*, two-tenths *grass*, a tenth of a tenth *hops*, and the rest *corn-land*. These make very pretty surface, especially as it is a rarity to see a *pollard tree*, and as nobody is so beastly as to *trim trees up* like the elms near the Wen. The country has no *flat* spot in it; yet the hills are not high. My road was a gentle rise or a gentle descent all the way. Continual new views strike the eye; but there is little variety in them: all is pretty, but nothing strikingly beautiful. The labouring people look pretty well. They have pigs. They invariably do best in the *woodland* and *forest* and *wild* countries. Where the mighty grasper has *all under his eye*, they can get but little. These are cross-roads, mere parish roads; but they are very good. While I was at the alehouse

at Ashurst, I heard some labouring men talking about the roads; and they having observed that the parish roads had become so wonderfully better within the last seven or eight years, I put in my word, and said: "It is odd enough, too, that the parish roads should become *better and better* as the farmers become *poorer and poorer!*" They looked at one another, and put on a sort of *expecting* look; for my observation seemed to *ask for information*. At last one of them said, "Why, it is because the farmers *have not the money to employ men*, and so they are put on the roads." "Yes," said I, "but they must pay them there." They said no more, and only *looked hard at one another*. They had, probably, never thought about this before. They seemed puzzled by it, and well they might, for it has bothered the wigs of boroughmongers, parsons and lawyers, and will bother them yet. Yes, this country now contains a body of occupiers of the land, who suffer the land to go to decay for want of means to pay a sufficiency of labourers; and, at the same time, are compelled to pay those labourers for doing that which is of no use to the occupiers! There, Collective Wisdom! Go: brag of that! Call that "the envy of surrounding nations and the admiration of the world."

It is a good year for nuts, and the wheat crop is fairly satisfactory. Most of the hops are poor, except near Tunbridge Wells, and the orchards "no great things."

Cobbett's insistence on an early morning departure must have caused some turmoil in his hotel:

TENTERDEN (KENT),

*Sunday, 31 August*

Here I am after a most delightful ride of twenty-four miles, through Frant, Lamberhurst, Goudhurst, Milkhouse Street, Benenden, and Rolvenden. By making a great stir in rousing waiters and "boots" and maids, and by leaving behind me the name of "a d—d noisy, troublesome fellow," I got clear of "*the Wells*," and out of the contagion of its Wen-engendered inhabitants, time enough to meet the first rays of the sun, on the hill that you come up in order to get to Frant, which is a most beautiful little village at about two miles from "*the Wells*." Here the land belongs, I suppose, to Lord Abergavenny, who has a mansion and park here. A very pretty place, and kept, seem-

ingly, in very nice order. I saw here what I never saw before: the bloom of the *common heath* we wholly overlook; but it is a very pretty thing; and here, when the plantations were made, and as they grew up, heath was *left to grow* on the sides of the roads in the plantations. The heath is not so much of a dwarf as we suppose. This is four feet high; and, being in full bloom, it makes the prettiest border that can be imagined. This place of Lord Abergavenny is, altogether, a very pretty place.

Then Lord Abergavenny and a neighbouring nobleman, Viscount Camden, are attacked as "sinecure placemen" who receive "great parcels" of the public money.

The country from Frant to Lamberhurst is very woody. I should think five-tenths woods and three grass. The corn, what there is of it, is about the same as farther back. I saw a hop-garden just before I got to Lamberhurst, which will have about two or three hundredweight to the acre. This Lamberhurst is a very pretty place. It lies in a valley with beautiful hills round it. The pastures about here are very fine; and the roads are as smooth and as handsome as those in Windsor Park.

From the last-mentioned place I had three miles to come to Goudhurst, the tower of the church of which is pretty lofty of itself, and the church stands upon the very summit of one of the steepest and highest hills in this part of the country. The church-yard has a view of about twenty-five miles in diameter; and the whole is over a very fine country, though the character of the country differs little from that which I have before described.

Once more we are treated to some of the favourite themes. He assails the element of gambling in the growing and marketing of hops. The sermon of the local incumbent is characterized as "general, commonplace, cold observation." A visit to the Methodist Sunday school and the preaching of a Methodist parson do nothing to lessen his antipathy to that sect. In fact, finding the wayside stocks neglected, he thinks it high time that "this mild, this gentle, this good-humoured sort of correction" were revived, and suggests Methodist parsons as possible occupants! However, balance in restored to his reflections by the sight of some straw-plaiting:

Just after I quitted Benenden, I saw some bunches of *straw* lying upon the quickset hedge of a cottage garden. I found,

upon inquiry, that they were bunches of the straw of grass. Seeing a face through the window of the cottage, I called out and asked what that straw was for. The person within said, it was to make *Leghorn-plat* with. I asked him (it was a young man) how he knew how to do it. He said he had got a little book that had been made by Mr Cobbett. I told him that I was the man, and should like to see some of his work; and asked him to bring it out to me, I being afraid to tie my horse. He told me that he was a *cripple*, and that he could not come out. At last I went in, leaving my horse to be held by a little girl. I found a young man, who has been a cripple for fourteen years. Some ladies in the neighbourhood had got him the book, and his family had got him the grass. He had made some very nice plat, and he had knitted the greater part of the crown of a bonnet, and had done the whole very nicely, though, as to the knitting, he had proceeded in a way to make it very tedious. He was knitting upon a block. However, these little matters will soon be set to rights. There will soon be persons to teach knitting in all parts of the country. I left this unfortunate young man with the pleasing reflection that I had, in all likelihood, been the cause of his gaining a good living, by his labour, during the rest of his life. How long will it be before my calumniators, the false and infamous London press, will take the whole of it together, and leave out its evil, do as much good as my pen has done in this one instance! How long will it be ere the ruffians, the base hirelings, the infamous traders who own and who conduct that press; how long ere one of them, or all of them together, shall cause a cottage to smile; shall add one ounce to the meal of the labouring man!

Rolvenden was my next village, and thence I could see the lofty church of Tenterden on the top of a hill at three miles distance. This Rolvenden is a very beautiful village; and, indeed, such are all the places along here. These villages are not like those in the *iron* counties, as I call them; that is, the counties of flint and chalk. Here the houses have gardens in front of them as well as behind; and there is a good deal of show and finery about them and their gardens. The high roads are without a stone in them; and everything looks like *gentility*. At this place, I saw several *arbutuses*, in one garden, and much finer than we see them in general; though, mind, this is no proof

of a mild climate; for the arbutus is a native of one much colder than that of England, and indeed than that of Scotland.

Coming from Benenden to Rolvenden I saw some swedish turnips, and, strange as the reader will think it, the first I saw after leaving Worth! The reason I take to be this: the farms are all furnished with grass fields as in Devonshire about Honiton. These grass fields give hay for the sheep and cattle in winter, or, at any rate, they do all that is not done by the white turnips. It may be a question, whether it would be more *profitable* to break up, and sow swedes; but this is the reason of their not being cultivated along here. White turnips are more easily got than swedes; they may be sown later; and, with good hay, they will fat cattle and sheep; but the swedes will do this business without hay. In Norfolk and Suffolk the land is not generally of a nature to make hay-fields. Therefore the people there resort to swedes. This has been a sad time for these hay-farmers, however, all along here. They have but just finished haymaking; and I see, all along my way, from East Grinstead to this place, hay-ricks the colour of dirt and *smoking* like dung-heaps.

Just before I got to this place (Tenterden), I crossed a bit of marsh land, which I found, upon inquiry, is a sort of little branch or spray running out of that immense and famous tract of country called *Romney Marsh*, which, I find, I have to cross to-morrow, in order to get to Dover, along by the seaside, through Hythe and Folkestone.

This Tenterden is a market town, and a singularly bright spot. It consists of one street, which is, in some places, more, perhaps, than two hundred feet wide. On one side of the street the houses have gardens before them, from 20 to 70 feet deep. The town is upon a hill; the afternoon was very fine, and just as I rose the hill and entered the street, the people had come out of church and were moving along towards their houses. It was a very fine sight. *Shabbily-dressed people do not go to church.* I saw, in short, drawn out before me, the dress and beauty of the town; and a great many very, very pretty girls I saw; and saw them, too, in their best attire. I remember the girls in the *Pays de Caux*, and, really, I think those of Tenterden resemble them. I do not know why they should not; for there is the *Pays de Caux*, only just over the water; just opposite this very place.



The hops about here are not so very bad. They say that one man, near this town, will have eight tons of hops upon ten acres of land! This is a great crop any year: a very great crop. This man may, perhaps, sell his hops for 1600 pounds! What a *gambling* concern it is! However, such hop-growing always was and always must be. It is a thing of perfect hazard.

The church at this place is a very large and fine old building. The tower stands upon a base thirty feet square. Like the church at Goudhurst, it will hold three thousand people. And, let it be observed, that, when these churches were built, people had not yet thought of cramming them with *pews*, as a stable is filled with stalls. Those who built these churches had no idea that worshipping God meant going to *sit* to hear a man talk out what he called preaching. By *worship*, they meant very different things; and, above all things, when they had made a fine and noble building, they did not dream of disfiguring the inside of it by filling its floor with large and deep boxes made of deal boards. In short, the floor was the place for the worshippers to stand or to kneel; all were upon a level *before God* at any rate. Some were not stuck into pews lined with green or red cloth, while others were crammed into corners to stand erect, or sit on the floor.

He blames the Reformation for the introduction of pews into our churches and then turns to a further attack on the Methodists. Used as the clergy of that church are to an itinerant ministry, they will nevertheless be somewhat startled to find their forerunners described by Cobbett as "roving fanatics." Yet, though he objected to their extempore prayers and found some of their preaching "a mixture of whining cant and foppish hypocrisy," he confesses that he was "attracted, fairly drawn down the street," to a Methodist meeting-house by the singing. "The singing," says he, "makes a great part of what passes in these meeting-houses. A number of women and girls singing together make very sweet sounds. . . . Young girls like to sing and young men like to hear them."

FOLKESTONE (KENT),

Monday (Noon), 1 Sept.

I have had a fine ride.

From Tenterden I set off at five o'clock, and got to Appledore after a most delightful ride, the high land upon my right, and

the low land on my left. The fog was so thick and white along some of the low land that I should have taken it for water, if little hills and trees had not risen up through it here and there. Indeed, the view was very much like those which are presented in the deep valleys, near the great rivers in New Brunswick (North America), at the time when the snows melt in the spring, and when, in sailing over those valleys, you look down from the side of your canoe, and see the lofty woods beneath you! I once went in a log canoe across a *sylvan sea* of this description, the canoe being paddled by two Yankees. We started in a stream; the stream became a wide water, and that water got deeper and deeper, as I could see by the trees (all was woods), till we got to sail amongst *the top branches of the trees*. By and by we got into a large open space; a piece of water a mile or two, or three or four wide, with *the woods under us*! A fog, with the tops of trees rising through it, is very much like this; and such was the fog that I saw this morning in my ride to Appledore. The church at Appledore is very large. Big enough to hold 3000 people; and the place does not seem to contain half a thousand old enough to go to church.

In coming along I saw a wheat-rick making, though I hardly think the wheat can be dry under the bands. The corn is all good here; and I am told they give twelve shillings an acre for reaping wheat.

In quitting this Appledore I crossed a canal and entered on Romney Marsh. This was grass-land on both sides of me to a great distance. The flocks and herds immense. The sheep are of a breed that takes its name from the marsh. They are called Romney Marsh sheep. Very pretty and large. The wethers, when fat, weigh about twelve stone, or one hundred pounds. The faces of these sheep are white; and, indeed, the whole sheep is as white as a piece of writing-paper. The wool does not look dirty and oily like that of other sheep. The cattle appear to be all of the *Sussex* breed. Red, loosed-limbed, and, they say, a great deal better than the Devonshire. How curious is the *natural economy* of a country! The *forests* of Sussex; those miserable tracts of heath and fern and bushes and sand called Ashdown Forest and Saint Leonard's Forest, to which latter Lord Erskine's estate belongs; these wretched tracts and the not much less wretched farms in their neighbourhood, *breed*

*the cattle* which we see *fattening* in Romney Marsh! They are calved in the spring; they are weaned in a little bit of grass-land; they are then put into stubbles and about in the fallows for the first summer; they are brought into the yard to winter on rough hay, peas-haulm, or barley-straw; the next two summers they spend in the rough woods or in the forests; the two winters they live on straw; they then pass another summer on the forest or at *work*; and then they come here or go elsewhere to be fatted. With cattle of this kind and with sheep such as I have spoken of before, this Marsh abounds in every part of it; and the sight is most beautiful.

The large church at Snargate, and later that at New Romney, again lead him to his oft-repeated reasoning that the population is not increasing. There is difficulty about the breakfast rasher at Brenzett.

The next village, which was two miles further on, was Old Romney, and along here I had, for great part of the way, corn-fields on one side of me and grass-land on the other. I asked what the amount of the crop of wheat would be. They told me better than five quarters to the acre. I thought so myself. I have a sample of the red wheat and another of the white. They are both very fine. They reap the wheat here nearly two feet from the ground; and even then they cut it three feet long! I never saw corn like this before. It very far exceeds the corn under Portsdown Hill, that at Gosport and Tichfield. They have here about eight hundred large, very large, sheaves to an acre. I wonder how long it will be after the end of the world before Mr Birkbeck will see the American "Prairies" half so good as this Marsh. In a garden here I saw some very fine onions, and a prodigious crop; sure sign of most excellent land.

The rotten borough of New Romney came next in my way; and here, to my great surprise, I found myself upon the sea-beach; for I had not looked at a map of Kent for years, and perhaps, never. I had got a list of places from a friend in Sussex, whom I asked to give me a route to Dover, and to send me through those parts of Kent which he thought would be most interesting to me. Never was I so much surprised as when I saw *a sail*. This place, now that the *squanderings* of the THING are over, is, they say, become miserably poor.

From New Romney to Dimchurch is about four miles: all along I had the sea-beach on my right, and, on my left, sometimes grass-land and sometimes corn-land. They told me here, and also further back in the Marsh, that they were to have 15s. an acre for reaping wheat.

From Dimchurch to Hythe you go on the sea beach, and nearly the same from Hythe to Sandgate, from which last place you come over the hill to Folkestone. But let me look back. Here has been the squandering! Here has been the pauper-making work! Here we see some of these causes that are now sending some farmers to the workhouse and driving others to flee the country or to cut their throats!

I had baited my horse at New Romney, and was coming jogging along very soberly, now looking at the sea, then looking at the cattle, then the corn, when my eye, in swinging round, lighted upon a great round building, standing upon the beach. I had scarcely had time to think about what it could be, when twenty or thirty others, standing along the coast, caught my eye; and if any one had been behind me, he might have heard me exclaim, in a voice that made my horse bound, "*The Martello Towers* by——!"

Here he fulminates against the Martello towers—"ridiculous things"—the Hythe barracks, and the various coast defences. He sees the coast of France, and at Dover is in half a mind to visit that country before he returns to Kensington.

Between Hythe and Sandgate (a village at about two miles from Hythe) I first saw the French coast. The chalk cliffs at Calais are as plain to the view as possible, and also the land, which they tell me is near Boulogne.

Folkestone lies under a hill here, as Reigate does in Surrey, only here the sea is open to your right as you come along. The corn is very early here, and very fine. All cut, even the beans; and they will be ready to cart in a day or two. Folkestone is now a little place; probably a quarter part as big as it was formerly. Here is a church one hundred and twenty feet long and fifty feet wide. It is a sort of little cathedral. The churchyard has evidently been three times as large as it is now.

Before I got into Folkestone I saw no less than eighty-four men, women, and boys and girls gleaning or leasing in a field

of about ten acres. The people all along here complain most bitterly of the *change of times*.

DOVER,

*Monday, 1 Sept., Evening*

I got here this evening about six o'clock, having come to-day thirty-six miles; but I must defer my remarks on the country between Folkestone and this place; a most interesting spot, and well worthy of particular attention. What place I shall date from after Dover I am by no means certain; but be it from what place it may, the continuation of my journal shall be published, in due course. If the Atlantic Ocean could not cut off the communication between me and my readers, a mere strip of water, not much wider than an American river, will hardly do it. I am, in real truth, undecided, as yet, whether I shall go on to France, or back to the *Wen*. I think I shall, when I go out of this inn, toss the bridle upon my horse's neck, and let him decide for me. I am sure he is more fit to decide on such a point than our ministers are to decide on any point connected with the happiness, greatness, and honour of this kingdom.



## XIV

*A Ride from Dover, through the Isle of Thanet, by Canterbury and Faversham, across to Maidstone, up to Tonbridge, through the Weald of Kent, and over the hills by Westerham and Hays, to the Wen*

DOVER,

*Wednesday, 3 Sept. 1823 (Evening)*

ON Monday I was balancing in my own mind whether I should go to France or not. To-day I have decided the question in the negative, and shall set off this evening for the Isle of Thanet; that spot so famous for corn.

I broke off without giving an account of the country between Folkestone and Dover, which is a very interesting one in itself, and was peculiarly interesting to me on many accounts. I have often mentioned, in describing the parts of the country over which I have travelled; I have often mentioned the *chalk-ridge* and also the *sand-ridge*, which I had traced, running parallel with each other from about Farnham, in Surrey, to Sevenoaks, in Kent. The reader must remember how particular I have been to observe that, in going up from Chilworth and Albury, through Dorking, Reigate, Godstone, and so on, the two chains, or ridges, approach so near to each other, that, in many places, you actually have a chalk-bank to your right and a sand-bank to your left, at not more than forty yards from each other. In some places, these chains of hills run off from each other to a great distance, even to a distance of twenty miles. They then approach again towards each other, and so they go on. I was always desirous to ascertain whether these chains, or ridges, continued on thus *to the sea*. I have now found that they do. And if you go out into the channel, at Folkestone, there you see a sand cliff and a chalk cliff. Folkestone stands upon the sand, in a little dell about seven hundred or eight hundred yards from the very termination of the ridge. All the way along, the chalk ridge is the most lofty, until you come to Leith Hill and Hindhead; and here, at Folkestone, the sand-ridge tapers off

in a sort of flat towards the sea. The land is like what it is at Reigate, a very steep hill; a hill of full a mile high, and bending exactly in the same manner as the hill at Reigate does. The turnpike-road winds up it and goes over it in exactly the same manner as that at Reigate. The land to the south of the hill begins a poor, thin, white loam upon the chalk; soon gets to be a very fine rich loam upon the chalk; goes on till it mingles the chalky loam with the sandy loam; and thus it goes on down to the sea-beach, or to the edge of the cliff. It is a beautiful bed of earth here, resembling in extent that on the south side of Portsdown Hill rather than that of Reigate. The crops here are always good if they are good anywhere. A large part of this fine tract of land, as well as the little town of Sandgate (which is a beautiful little place upon the beach itself), and also great part of the town of Folkestone belong, they tell me, to Lord Radnor, who takes his title of viscount from Folkestone. Upon the hill begins, and continues on for some miles, that stiff red loam, approaching to a clay, which I have several times described as forming the soil at the top of this chalk-ridge. I spoke of it in the *Register* of the 16th of August last, page 409, and I then said that it was like the land on the top of this very ridge at Ashmansworth in the north of Hampshire. At Reigate you find precisely the same soil upon the top of the hill, a very red, clayey sort of loam, with big yellow flint stones in it. Everywhere, the soil is the same upon the top of the high part of this ridge. I have now found it to be the same, on the edge of the sea, that I found it on the north-east corner of Hampshire.

From the hill, you keep descending all the way to Dover, a distance of about six miles, and it is absolutely six miles of down hill. On your right, you have the lofty land which forms a series of chalk cliffs, from the top of which you look into the sea; on your left, you have ground that goes rising up from you in the same sort of way. The turnpike-road goes down the middle of a valley, each side of which, as far as you can see, may be about a mile and a half. It is six miles long, you will remember; and here, therefore, with very little interruption, very few chasms, there are *eighteen square miles of corn*. It is a patch such as you very seldom see, and especially of corn so good as it is here. I should think that the wheat all along here would average pretty nearly four quarters to the acre. A few

oats are sown. A great deal of barley, and that a very fine crop.

The town of Dover is like other sea-port towns; but really much more clean, and with less blackguard people in it than I ever observed in any sea-port before. It is a most picturesque place, to be sure. On one side of it rises, upon the top of a very steep hill, the Old Castle, with all its fortifications. On the other side of it there is another chalk hill, the side of which is pretty nearly perpendicular, and rises up from sixty to a hundred feet higher than the tops of the houses, which stand pretty nearly close to the foot of the hill.

I got into Dover rather late. It was dusk when I was going down the street towards the quay. I happened to look up, and was quite astonished to perceive cows grazing upon a spot apparently fifty feet above the tops of the houses, and measuring horizontally not, perhaps, more than ten or twenty feet from a line which would have formed a continuation into the air. I went up to the same spot, the next day, myself; and you actually look down upon the houses, as you look out of a window upon people in the street. The valley that runs down from Folkestone is, when it gets to Dover, crossed by another valley that runs down from Canterbury, or, at least, from the Canterbury direction. It is in the gorge of this cross valley that Dover is built. The two chalk hills jut out into the sea, and the water that comes up between them forms a harbour for this ancient, most interesting, and beautiful place. On the hill to the north stands the castle of Dover, which is fortified in the ancient manner, except on the sea side, where it has the steep *Cliff* for a fortification. On the south side of the town the hill is, I believe, rather more lofty than that on the north side; and here is that cliff which is described by Shakespeare in the play of *King Lear*. It is fearfully steep, certainly. Very nearly perpendicular for a considerable distance. The grass grows well, to the very tip of the cliff; and you see cows and sheep grazing there with as much unconcern as if grazing in the bottom of a valley.

His main reason for visiting this hill, however, is to see the defence works—"the sort of means that had been made use of to squander away countless millions of money." He claims that "more brick and stone have been buried in this hill than could go to build a neat new cottage for every labouring man in the counties

of Kent and Sussex." The hill is "hollowed like a honeycomb" with trenches and bomb-proof caves. Cobbett's main military objection to these works is that these "horrible holes and hiding places" were devised for defence and not for attack. Furthermore, if the French had invaded England they would not have chosen to "crawl up Shakespeare's Cliff" but would have selected some easier part of the coast for their attack. He contends that the government must have known that such an expenditure was useless. What they sought to prevent was "the landing, not of Frenchmen, but of French principles." Yet in France, "spirited and sensible people" have rid themselves of the burden of tithes, with which the English farmer is still encumbered.

SANDWICH,

*Wednesday, 3 Sept., Night*

I got to this place about half an hour after the ringing of the eight o'clock bell, or curfew, which I heard at about two miles distance from the place. From the town of Dover you come up the Castle Hill, and have a most beautiful view from the top of it. You have the sea, the chalk cliffs of Calais, the high land at Boulogne, the town of Dover just under you, the valley towards Folkestone, and the much more beautiful valley towards Canterbury; and going on a little further, you have the Downs and the Essex or Suffolk coast in full view, with a most beautiful corn country to ride along through. The corn was chiefly cut between Dover and Walmer. The barley almost all cut and tied up in sheaf. Nothing but the beans seemed to remain standing along here. They are not quite so good as the rest of the corn; but they are by no means bad.

He takes a look at Walmer Castle, residence of one of the hated "placemen," whom he apostrophizes on the question of the price of corn. He finds Deal "a most villainous place," full of "filthy-looking people." Though Sandwich "is as villainous a hole as one could wish to see" yet it is surrounded by very fine land with a high yield of corn to the acre.

CANTERBURY,

*Thursday Afternoon, 4 Sept.*

In quitting Sandwich, you immediately cross a river up which vessels bring coals from the sea. This marsh is about a couple of miles wide. It begins at the sea-beach, opposite the Downs,

to my right hand, coming from Sandwich, and it wheels round to my left and ends at the sea-beach, opposite Margate roads. This marsh was formerly covered with the sea, very likely; and hence the land within this sort of semicircle, the name of which is Thanet, was called an *Isle*. It is, in fact, an island now, for the same reason that Portsea is an island, and that New York is an island; for there certainly is the water in this river that goes round and connects one part of the sea with the other. I had to cross this river, and to cross the marsh, before I got into the famous Isle of Thanet, which it was my intention to cross.

Passing a salt works, he inveighs against the salt-tax and draws attention to the fact that after the Revolution the French rid themselves of this imposition.

He comes again to a rich corn-growing country where, in spite of the signs of prosperity round them, the labourers are impoverished. The reason, Cobbett says, is that in such areas the wealth of the land is in the hands of the few. Labourers fare better in a region of woods and coppices, for there the land is not entirely appropriated for large-scale cultivation, and plenty of fuel is available at no cost.

On the marsh I found the same sort of sheep as on Romney Marsh; but the cattle here are chiefly Welsh; black, and called runts. They are nice hardy cattle; and, I am told, that this is the description of cattle that they fat all the way up on this north side of Kent.—When I got upon the corn land in the Isle of Thanet, I got into a garden indeed. There is hardly any fallow; comparatively few turnips. It is a country of corn. Most of the harvest is in; but there are some fields of wheat and of barley not yet housed. A great many pieces of lucerne, and all of them very fine. I left Ramsgate to my right about three miles, and went right across the island to Margate; but that place is so thickly settled with stock-jobbing cuckolds, at this time of the year, that, having no fancy to get their horns stuck into me, I turned away to my left when I got within about half a mile of the town. I got to a little hamlet, where I breakfasted; but could get no corn for my horse, and no bacon for myself! All was corn around me. Barns, I should think, two hundred feet long; ricks of enormous size and most numerous; crops of wheat, five quarters to an acre, on the average; and a public-house without either bacon or corn! The labourers' houses, all



along through this island, beggarly in the extreme. The people dirty, poor-looking; ragged, but particularly *dirty*. The men and boys with dirty faces, and dirty smock-frocks, and dirty shirts; and, good God! what a difference between the wife of a labouring man here, and the wife of a labouring man in the forests and woodlands of Hampshire and Sussex! Invariably have I observed that the richer the soil, and the more destitute of woods; that is to say, the more purely a corn country, the more miserable the labourers. The cause is this, the great, the big bull frog grasps all. In this beautiful island every inch of land is appropriated by the rich. No hedges, no ditches, no commons, no grassy lanes: a country divided into great farms; a few trees surround the great farm-house. All the rest is bare of trees; and the wretched labourer has not a stick of wood, and has no place for a pig or cow to graze, or even to lie down upon. The rabbit countries are the countries for labouring men. There the ground is not so valuable. There it is not so easily appropriated by the few. Here, in this island, the work is almost all done by the horses. The horses plough the ground; they sow the ground; they hoe the ground; they carry the corn home; they thresh it out; and they carry it to market: nay, in this island, they *rake* the ground; they rake up the straggling straws and ears; so that they do the whole, except the reaping and the mowing. It is impossible to have an idea of anything more miserable than the state of the labourers in this part of the country.

After coming by Margate, I passed a village called Monckton, and another called Sarr. At Sarr there is a bridge, over which you come out of the island, as you go into it over the bridge at Sandwich. At Monckton they had *seventeen men working on the roads*, though the harvest was not quite in, and though, of course, it had all to be threshed out; but, at Monckton, they had *four threshing machines*; and they have three threshing machines at Sarr, though there, also, they have several men upon the roads! This is a shocking state of things; and in spite of everything that the Jenkinsons and the Scots can do, this state of things must be changed.

At Sarr, or a little way further back, I saw a man who had just begun to reap a field of canary seed. The plants were too far advanced to be cut in order to be bleached for the making

of plat; but I got the reaper to select me a few green stalks that grew near a bush that stood on the outside of the piece. These I have brought on with me, in order to give them a trial. At Sarr I began to cross the marsh, and had, after this, to come through the village of Up-street, and another village called Steady, before I got to Canterbury. At Up-street I was struck with the words written upon a board which was fastened upon a pole, which pole was standing in a garden near a neat little box of a house. The words were these. "PARADISE PLACE. *Spring guns and steel traps are set here.*" A pretty idea it must give us of Paradise to know that spring guns and steel traps are set in it! This is doubtless some stock-jobber's place; for, in the first place, the name is likely to have been selected by one of that crew; and, in the next place, whenever any of them go to the country, they look upon it that they are to begin a sort of warfare against everything around them. They invariably look upon every labourer as a thief.

Even in Canterbury Cobbett observes that public money has been spent on barracks—"they are perfectly enormous; but thanks be unto God, they begin to crumble down." His invective reaches new heights when he calls Pitt "the great snorting bawler," whose monument should be set up in the midst of "this hundred or two acres covered with barracks." He describes Canterbury as a fine old town "remarkable for cleanliness and niceness, notwithstanding it has a cathedral in it!" He visits the cathedral to thank St Swithin for having tricked the corn speculators by bringing about an improvement in the weather just at the right time to allow the harvest to be gathered, contrary to expectations. He writes from a farm near Faversham:

The land where I am now is equal to that of the Isle of Thanet. The harvest is nearly over, and all the crops have been prodigiously fine. In coming from Canterbury, you come to the top of a hill, called Baughton Hill, at four miles from Canterbury on the London Road; and you there look down into one of the finest flats in England. A piece of marsh comes up nearly to Faversham; and at the edge of that marsh lies the farm where I now am. The land here is a deep loam upon chalk; and this is also the nature of the land in the Isle of Thanet and all the way from that to Dover. The orchards grow well upon this soil. The trees grow finely, the fruit is large and of fine flavour.

In 1821 I gave Mr William Waller, who lives here, some American apple-cuttings; and he has now some as fine Newtown Pippins as one would wish to see. They are very large of their sort; very free in their growth; and they promise to be very fine apples of the kind. Mr Waller had cuttings from me of several sorts, in 1822. These were cut down last year; they have, of course, made shoots this summer; and great numbers of these shoots have fruit-spurs, which will have blossom, if not fruit, next year. This very rarely happens, I believe; and the state of Mr Waller's trees clearly proves to me that the introduction of these American trees would be a great improvement.

My American apples, when I left Kensington, promised to be very fine; and the apples, which I have frequently mentioned as being upon cuttings imported last spring, promised to come to perfection; a thing which, I believe, we have not an instance of before.

MERRYWORTH,

*Friday Evening, 5 Sept.*

A friend at Tenterden told me that, if I had a mind to know Kent, I must go through Romney Marsh to Dover, from Dover to Sandwich, from Sandwich to Margate, from Margate to Canterbury, from Canterbury to Faversham, from Faversham to Maidstone, and from Maidstone to Tonbridge. I found from Mr Waller, this morning, that the regular turnpike route, from his house to Maidstone, was through Sittingbourne. I had been along that road several times; and besides, to be covered with dust was what I could not think of, when I had it in my power to get to Maidstone without it. I took the road across the country, quitting the London road, or rather, crossing it, in the dell, between Ospringe and Green Street. I instantly began to go up hill, slowly, indeed; but up hill. I came through the villages of Newnham, Doddington, Ringlestone, and to that of Hollingbourne. I had come up hill for thirteen miles, from Mr Waller's house. At last, I got to the top of this hill, and went along, for some distance, upon level ground. I found I was got upon just the same sort of land as that on the hill at Folkestone, at Reigate, at Ropley, and at Ashmansworth. The red clayey loam, mixed up with great yellow flint stones. I found fine meadows here, just such as are at Ashmansworth

(that is to say, on the north Hampshire hills). This sort of ground is characterized by an astonishing depth that they have to go for the water. At Ashmansworth, they go to a depth of more than three hundred feet. As I was riding along upon the top of this hill in Kent, I saw the same beautiful sort of meadows that there are at Ashmansworth; I saw the corn backward; I was just thinking to go up to some house, to ask how far they had to go for water, when I saw a large well-bucket, and all the chains and wheels belonging to such a concern; but here was also the tackle for a *horse* to work in drawing up the water! I asked about the depth of the well; and the information I received must have been incorrect; because I was told it was three hundred yards. I asked this of a public-house keeper further on, not seeing anybody where the farm-house was. I make no doubt that the depth is, as near as possible, that of Ashmansworth. Upon the top of this hill, I saw the finest field of beans that I have seen this year, and, by very far, indeed, the *finest piece of hops*. A beautiful piece of hops, surrounded by beautiful plantations of young ash, producing poles for hop-gardens. My road here pointed towards the west. It soon wheeled round towards the south; and, all of a sudden, I found myself upon the edge of a hill, as lofty and as steep as that at Folkestone, at Reigate, or at Ashmansworth. It was the same famous chalk ridge that I was crossing again. When I got to the edge of the hill, and before I got off my horse to lead him down this more than mile of hill, I sat and surveyed the prospect before me, and to the right and to the left. This is what the people of Kent call the *Garden of Eden*. It is a district of meadows, corn fields, hop-gardens, and orchards of apples, pears, cherries and filberts, with very little if any land which cannot, with propriety, be called good. There are plantations of chestnut and of ash frequently occurring; and as these are cut when long enough to make poles for hops, they are at all times objects of great beauty.

At the foot of the hill of which I have been speaking is the village of Hollingbourne; thence you come on to Maidstone. From Maidstone to this place (Merryworth) is about seven miles, and these are the finest seven miles that I have ever seen in England or anywhere else. The Medway is to your left, with its meadows about a mile wide. You cross the Medway, in

coming out of Maidstone, and it goes and finds its way down to Rochester, through a break in the chalk ridge. From Maidstone to Merryworth, I should think that there were hop-gardens on one half of the way on both sides of the road. Then looking across the Medway, you see hop-gardens and orchards two miles deep, on the side of a gently rising ground: and this continues with you all the way from Maidstone to Merryworth. The orchards form a great feature of the country; and the plantations of ashes and of chestnuts that I mentioned before, add greatly to the beauty. These gardens of hops are kept very clean, in general, though some of them have been neglected this year owing to the bad appearance of the crop. The culture is sometimes mixed: that is to say, apple-trees or cherry-trees or filbert-trees and hops, in the same ground. This is a good way, they say, of raising an orchard. I do not believe it; and I think that nothing is gained by any of these mixtures. They plant apple-trees or cherry-trees in rows here; they then plant a filbert-tree close to each of these large fruit-trees; and then they cultivate the middle of the ground by planting potatoes. This is being too greedy. It is impossible that they can gain by this. What they gain one way they lose the other way; and I verily believe that the most profitable way would be never to mix things at all. In coming from Maidstone I passed through a village called Teston, where Lord Basham has a seat.

A believer in early rising, and one who never dallied over meals, Cobbett commences his day's ride from Mereworth at five o'clock in the morning, and on the way to Tonbridge passes the seat of Lord Torrington—"an indifferent looking place."

I here began to see South Down sheep again, which I had not seen since the time I left Tenterden. All along here the villages are at not more than two miles distance from each other. They have all large churches, and scarcely anybody to go to them. At a village called Hadlow, there is a house belonging to a Mr May, the most singular looking thing I ever saw. An immense house stuck all over with a parcel of chimneys, or things like chimneys; little brick columns, with a sort of caps on them, looking like carnation sticks, with caps at the top to catch the earwigs. The building is all of brick, and has the oddest appearance of anything I ever saw. This Tonbridge



is but a common country town, though very clean, and the people looking very well. The climate must be pretty warm here, for in entering the town I saw a large *Althea Frutex* in bloom, a thing rare enough, any year, and particularly a year like this.

WESTERHAM,

*Saturday, Noon, 6 Sept.*

Instead of going on to the Wen along the turnpike-road through Sevenoaks, I turned to my left when I got about a mile out of Tonbridge, in order to come along that tract of country called the Weald of Kent; that is to say, the solid clays, which have no bottom, which are unmixed with chalk, sand, stone, or anything else; the country of dirty roads and of oak trees. I stopped at Tonbridge only a few minutes; but in the Weald I stopped to breakfast at a place called Leigh. From Leigh I came to Chittingstone causeway, leaving Tonbridge Wells six miles over the hills to my left. From Chittingstone I came to Bough-beach, thence to Four Elms, and thence to this little market-town of Westerham, which is just upon the border of Kent. Indeed, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex form a joining very near to this town. Westerham, exactly like Reigate and Godstone, and Sevenoaks, and Dorking, and Folkestone, lies between the sand-ridge and the chalk-ridge. The valley is here a little wider than at Reigate, and that is all the difference there is between the places. As soon as you get over the sand hill to the south of Reigate, you get into the Weald of Surrey; and here, as soon as you get over the sand hill to the south of Westerham, you get into the Weald of Kent.

I have now, in order to get to the Wen, to cross the chalk-ridge once more, and at a point where I never crossed it before. Coming through the Weald I found the corn very good; and low as the ground is, wet as it is, cold as it is, there will be very little of the wheat which will not be housed before Saturday night. All the corn is good, and the barley excellent. Not far from Bough-beach, I saw two oak trees, one of which was, they told me, more than thirty feet round, and the other more than twenty-seven; but they have been hollow for half a century. They are not much bigger than the oak upon Tilford Green, if any. I mean in the trunk; but they are hollow, while that tree

is sound in all its parts, and growing still. I have had a most beautiful ride through the Weald. The day is very hot; but I have been in the shade; and my horse's feet very often in the rivulets and wet lanes. In one place I rode above a mile completely arched over by the boughs of the underwood, growing in the banks of the lane. What an odd taste that man must have who prefers a turnpike-road to a lane like this.

Very near to Westerham there are hops: and I have seen now and then a little bit of hop garden, even in the Weald. Hops will grow well where lucerne will grow well; and lucerne will grow well where there is a rich top and a dry bottom. When therefore you see hops in the Weald, it is on the side of some hill, where there is sand or stone at bottom, and not where there is real clay beneath. There appear to be hops, here and there, all along from nearly at Dover to Alton, in Hampshire. You find them all along Kent; you find them at Westerham; across at Worth, in Sussex; at Godstone, in Surrey; over to the north of Merrow Down, near Guildford; at Godalming; under the Hog's-back, at Farnham; and all along that way to Alton. But there, I think, they end. The whole face of the country seems to rise, when you get just beyond Alton, and to keep up. Whether you look to the north, the south, or west, the land seems to rise, and the hops cease, till you come again away to the north-west, in Herefordshire.

KENSINGTON,

*Saturday Night, 6 Sept.*

Here I close my day, at the end of forty-four miles. In coming up the chalk hill from Westerham, I prepared myself for the red stiff clay-like loam, the big yellow flints and the meadows; and I found them all. I have now gone over this chalk-ridge in the following places: at Coombe in the north-west of Hampshire; I mean the north-west corner, the very extremity of the county. I have gone over it at Ashmansworth, or Highclere, going from Newbury to Andover; at King's Clere, going from Newbury to Winchester; at Ropley, going from Alresford to Selborne; at Dippinghall going from Crondall to Thursly; at Merrow, going from Chertsey to Chilworth; at Reigate; at Westerham, and then, between these, at Godstone; at Seven-oaks, going from London to Battle; at Hollingbourne, as

mentioned above, and at Folkestone. In all these places I have crossed this chalk-ridge. Everywhere, upon the top of it, I have found a flat, and the soil of all these flats I have found to be a red stiff loam mingled up with big yellow flints. A soil difficult to work; but by no means bad, whether for wood, hops, grass, orchards or corn. I once before mentioned that I was assured that the pasture upon these bleak hills was as rich as that which is found in the north of Wiltshire, in the neighbourhood of Swindon, where they make some of the best cheese in the kingdom. Upon these hills I have never found the labouring people poor and miserable, as in the rich vales. All is not appropriated where there are coppices and wood, where the cultivation is not so easy and the produce so very large.

After getting up the hill from Westerham, I had a general descent to perform all the way to the Thames. When you get to Beckenham, which is the last parish in Kent, the country begins to assume a cockney-like appearance; all is artificial, and you no longer feel any interest in it. I was anxious to make this journey into Kent, in the midst of harvest, in order that I might *know* the real state of the crops. The result of my observations and my inquiries is, that the crop is a *full average* crop of everything except barley, and that the barley yields a great deal more than an average crop. I thought that the beans were very poor during my ride into Hampshire; but then I saw no real bean countries. I have seen such countries now; and I do not think that the beans present us with a bad crop. As to the quality, it is, in no case (except perhaps the barley), equal to that of last year. We had, last year, an Italian summer. When the wheat or other grain has to *ripen in wet weather*, it will not be *bright*, as it will when it has to ripen in fair weather. It will have a dingy or clouded appearance; and perhaps the flour may not be quite so good. The wheat, in fact, will not be so heavy. In order to enable others to judge, as well as myself, I took samples from the fields as I went along. I took them very fairly, and as often as I thought that there was any material change in the soil or other circumstances. During the ride I took sixteen samples. These are now at the office of the *Register*, in Fleet Street, where they may be seen by any gentleman who thinks the information likely to be useful to him. The samples are numbered, and there is a reference pointing out the place where

each sample was taken. The opinions that I gather amount to this: that there is an average crop of everything, and a little more of barley.

The remainder of the Journal of this ride is concerned with a discussion of the ever-burning question of the price of wheat. The pro-government *Courier* has stated that it is expected that in November the price of wheat will "nearly approach to seventy shillings," a price which, the *Courier* maintains, will allow of the sale of Canadian bonded wheat, but will at the same time exclude foreign grain. Cobbett, on the contrary, is convinced that some wheat will probably be thirty shillings a quarter, or less, before Christmas, for the price is falling already. He contends that the government, supported by the press, is anxious that the price of wheat should be kept up in order that the interest on the funds should be maintained. Thus the existence of the government depends, not upon its achievements, but upon the price of wheat. Yet all harvest reports show good crops and wheat is likely to be a fair average price. A turn for the better in the weather has ruined the calculations of the speculators.

## XV

### *A Ride from Kensington, across Surrey, and along that county*

THIS is a short tour of three days' duration, undertaken after a gap of two years since the previous ride. Cobbett records very little of the countryside and its life, being diverted to other subjects. A visit to a farm sale causes him to lament the changing habits of farmers :

REIGATE,

*Wednesday Evening, 19 October, 1825*

Having some business at Hartwood, near Reigate, I intended to come off this morning on horseback, along with my son Richard, but it rained so furiously the last night that we gave up the horse project for to-day, being, by appointment, to be at Reigate by ten o'clock to-day: so that we came off this morning at five o'clock in a post-chaise, intending to return home and take our horses. Finding, however, that we cannot quit this place till Friday, we have now sent for our horses, though the weather is dreadfully wet. But we are under a farm-house roof, and the wind may whistle and the rain fall as much as they like.

REIGATE,

*Thursday Evening, 20 October*

Having done my business at Hartwood to-day about eleven o'clock, I went to a sale at a farm, which the farmer is quitting. Here I had a view of what has long been going on all over the country. The farm, which belongs to *Christ's Hospital*, has been held by a man of the name of Charington, in whose family the lease has been, I hear, a great number of years. The house is hidden by trees. It stands in the Weald of Surrey, close by the *River Mole*, which is here a mere rivulet, though just below this house the rivulet supplies the very prettiest flour-mill I ever saw in my life.

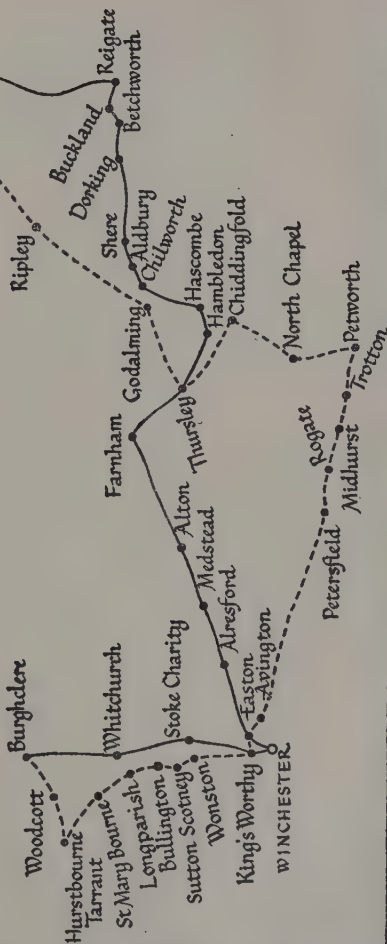
Everything about this farm-house was formerly the scene of



*plain manners* and *plentiful living*. Oak clothes-chests, oak bedsteads, oak chests of drawers, and oak tables to eat on, long, strong, and well supplied with joint stools. Some of the things were many hundreds of years old. But all appeared to be in a state of decay and nearly of *disuse*. There appeared to have been hardly any *family* in that house, where formerly there were, in all probability, from ten to fifteen men, boys, and maids: and, which was the worst of all, there was a *parlour*. Aye, and a *carpet* and *bell-pull* too! One end of the front of this once plain and substantial house had been moulded into a "*parlour*;" and there was the mahogany table, and the fine chairs, and the fine glass, and all as bare-faced upstart as any stock-jobber in the kingdom can boast of. And there were the decanters, the glasses, the "dinner-set" of crockery-ware, and all just in the true stock-jobber style. And I dare say it has been 'Squire Charington and the Miss Charington's; and not plain Master Charington, and his son Hodge, and his daughter Betty Charington, all of whom this accursed system has, in all likelihood, transmuted into a species of mock gentlefolks, while it has ground the labourers down into real slaves. Why do not farmers now *feed* and *lodge* their work-people, as they did formerly? Because they cannot keep them *upon so little* as they give them in wages. This is the real cause of the change. There needs no more to prove that the lot of the working classes has become worse than it formerly was. This fact alone is quite sufficient to settle this point. All the world knows that a number of people, boarded in the same house, and at the same table, can, with as good food, be boarded much cheaper than those persons divided into twos, threes, or fours, can be boarded. This is a well-known truth: therefore, if the farmer now shuts his pantry against his labourers, and pays them wholly in money, is it not clear that he does it because he thereby gives them a living *cheaper* to him; that is to say, a *worse* living than formerly? Mind, he has a *house* for them; a kitchen for them to sit in, bedrooms for them to sleep in, tables, and stools, and benches, of everlasting duration. All these he has: all these *cost him nothing*; and yet so much does he gain by pinching them in wages that he lets all these things remain as of no use rather than feed labourers in the house. Judge, then, of the *change* that has taken place in the condition of these labourers! And

# Rural Rides \*15.16.17.18.19

LONDON



be astonished, if you can, at the *pauperism* and the *crimes* that now disgrace this once happy and moral England.

The land produces, on an average, what it always produced, but there is a new distribution of the produce. This 'Squire Charington's father used, I dare say, to sit at the head of the oak-table along with his men, say grace to them, and cut up the meat and the pudding. He might take a cup of *strong beer* to himself, when they had none; but that was pretty nearly all the difference in their manner of living. So that *all* lived well. But the 'squire had many *wine-decanter*s and *wine-glasses* and "a dinner set," and a "breakfast set," and "dessert knives;" and these evidently imply carryings on and a consumption that must of necessity have greatly robbed the long oak table if it had remained fully tenanted. That long table could not share in the work of the decaners and the dinner set. Therefore, it became almost untenanted; the labourers retreated to hovels, called cottages; and instead of board and lodging, they got money; so little of it as to enable the employer to drink wine; but, then, that he might not reduce them to *quite starvation*, they were enabled to come to him, in the *king's name*, and demand food as *paupers*. And now, mind, that which a man receives in the *king's name*, he knows well he has *by force*; and it is not in nature that he should *thank* anybody for it, and least of all the party *from whom it is forced*. Then, if this sort of force be insufficient to obtain him enough to eat and to keep him warm, is it surprising if he think it no great offence against God (who created no man to starve) to use another sort of force more within his own control? Is it, in short, surprising, if he resort to *theft* and *robbery*?

For these things he blames, as usual, the "infernal stock-jobbing system" which causes farmers to seek to imitate the mode of life of the "fund-holders." Their children refuse to take up farm work and "become clerks, or some skimmy-dish thing or other." There is an interesting paragraph on turkey rearing:

I was going, to-day, by the side of a plat of ground, where there was a very fine flock of *turkeys*. I stopped to admire them, and observed to the owner how fine they were, when he answered, "We owe them entirely to you, sir, for we never raised one till we read your *Cottage Economy*." I then told him that

we had, this year, raised two broods at Kensington, one black and one white, one of nine and one of eight; but that, about three weeks back, they appeared to become dull and pale about the head; and that, therefore, I sent them to a farm-house, where they recovered instantly, and the broods being such a contrast to each other in point of colour, they were now, when prowling over a grass field, amongst the most agreeable sights that I had ever seen. I intended, of course, to let them get their full growth at Kensington, where they were in a grass plat about fifteen yards square, and where I thought that the feeding of them, in great abundance, with lettuces and other greens from the garden, together with grain, would carry them on to perfection. But I found that I was wrong; and that though you may raise them to a certain size in a small place and with such management, they then, if so much confined, begin to be sickly. Several of mine began actually to droop: and the very day they were sent into the country, they became as gay as ever, and in three days all the colour about their heads came back to them.

Cobbett recalls that Reigate at one time had a priory and he considers how beneficial to the community were such foundations. They fed the poor, administered to the sick, and taught the people for nothing. He deplores the "monstrous charge" made against the Roman Catholic Church that it obtained money for such establishments because priests exhorted dying rich men to leave their estates to the church. He seeks to prove that the same sort of thing happens in the Church of England, and recounts at some length the story of Mr Baron Maseres, Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer, who left a large portion of his immense fortune to an Anglican clergyman. To have left this money for the endowment of a convent would, Cobbett argues, "have been a more sensible and public-spirited part in the Baron, much more beneficial to the town and environs of Reigate, and beyond all measure more honourable to his own memory."

CHILWORTH,

*Friday Evening, 21 Oct.*

It has been very fine to-day. Yesterday morning there was *snow* on Reigate Hill, enough to look white from where we were in the valley. We set off about half-past one o'clock, and came all down the valley, through Buckland, Betchworth, Dorking, Sheer and Aldbury to this place. Very few prettier rides in

England, and the weather beautifully fine. There are more meeting-houses than churches in the vale, and I have heard of no less than five people, in this vale, who have gone crazy on account of religion.

To-morrow we intend to move on towards the west; to take a look, just a look, at the Hampshire parsons again. The turnips seem fine; but they cannot be large. All other things are very fine indeed. Everything seems to prognosticate a hard winter. All the country people say that it will be so.



## XVI

### *A Ride from Chilworth, in Surrey, to Winchester*

HERE is an enthusiastic account—with but trifling diversions—of rural scenes and sports. Cobbett reveals his fondness for the sporting breeds of dogs. He takes his young son Richard over some of the ground of his own youth. The only departures from the main theme are to connect the semaphore with the curse of the National Debt, to note the decay in the fortunes of some of the country gentry, to deplore the service he attended in Winchester Cathedral, and, finally, to rejoice with typical Cobbett pride in the arrival of the proofs of the Italian edition of his *Protestant Reformation*.

THURSLEY, FOUR MILES FROM  
GODALMING, SURREY,

*Sunday Evening, 23 October, 1825*

We set out from Chilworth to-day about noon. This is a little hamlet, lying under the south side of St Martha's Hill; and on the other side of that hill, a little to the north-west, is the town of Guildford, which (taken with its environs) I, who have seen so many, many towns, think the prettiest, and, taken all together, the most agreeable and most happy-looking that I ever saw in my life. Here are hill and dell in endless variety. Here are the chalk and the sand, vieing with each other in making beautiful scenes. Here is a navigable river and fine meadows. Here are woods and downs. Here is something of everything but *fat marshes* and their skeleton-making *agues*. The vale, all the way down to Chilworth from Reigate, is very delightful.

We did not go to Guildford, nor did we cross the *River Wey*, to come through Godalming; but bore away to our left, and came through the village of Hambleton, going first to Hascomb to show Richard the South Downs from that high land, which looks southward over the *Wealds* of Surrey and Sussex, with all their fine and innumerable oak-trees. Those that travel on turnpike-roads know nothing of England.—From Hascomb to

Thursley almost the whole way is across fields, or commons, or along narrow lands. Here we see the people without any disguise or affectation. Against a *great road* things are made for *show*. Here we see them *without any show*. And here we gain real knowledge as to their situation.—We crossed to-day three turnpike-roads, that from Guildford to Horsham, that from Godalming to Worthing, I believe, and that from Godalming to Chichester.

THURSLEY,  
*Wednesday, 26 Oct.*

The weather has been beautiful ever since last Thursday morning; but there has been a white frost every morning, and the days have been coldish. *Here*, however, I am quite at home in a room where there is one of my *American fireplaces*, bought by my host of Mr Judson of Kensington, who has made many a score of families comfortable, instead of sitting shivering in the cold. At the house of the gentleman whose house I am now in, there is a good deal of *fuel-wood*; and here I see in the parlours those fine and cheerful fires that make a great part of the happiness of the Americans. But these fires are to be had only in this sort of fireplace. Ten times the fuel; nay, no quantity, would effect the same object, in any other fireplace. It is equally good for coal as for wood; but, for *pleasure*, a wood-fire is the thing. There is round about almost every gentleman's or great farmer's house more wood suffered to rot every year, in one shape or another, than would make (with this fireplace) a couple of rooms constantly warm, from October to June. *Here*, peat, turf, saw-dust, and wood, are burnt in these fireplaces. My present host has three of the fireplaces.

Being out a-coursing to-day, I saw a queer-looking building upon one of the thousands of hills that nature has tossed up in endless variety of form round the skirts of the lofty Hindhead. This building is, it seems, called a *Semaphore*, or *Semiphare*, or something of that sort. What this word may have been hatched out of I cannot say; but it means a *job*, I am sure. To call it an *alarm-post* would not have been so convenient; for people not endued with Scotch *intellect* might have wondered why the devil we should have to pay for alarm-posts; and might have thought that, with all our "glorious victories," we had "brought

our hogs to a fine market" if our dread of the enemy were such as to induce us to have alarm-posts all over the country! Such unintellectual people might have thought that we had "conquered France by the immortal Wellington" to little purpose, if we were still in such fear as to build alarm-posts; and they might, in addition, have observed that for many hundred of years England stood in need of neither signal-posts nor standing army of mercenaries; but relied safely on the courage and public spirit of the people themselves. By calling the thing by an outlandish name, these reflections amongst the unintellectual are obviated. *Alarm-post* would be a nasty name; and it would puzzle people exceedingly, when they saw one of these at a place like Ashe, a little village on the north side of the chalk-ridge (called the Hog's Back) going from Guildford to Farnham! What can this be *for*? Why are these expensive things put up all over the country? Respecting the movements of *whom* is wanted this *alarm-system*? Will no member ask this in parliament?

The great business of life, in the country, appertains, in some way or other, to the *game*, and especially at this time of the year. If it were not for the game, a country life would be like an *everlasting honeymoon*, which would, in about half a century, put an end to the human race. In towns, or large villages, people make a shift to find the means of rubbing the rust off from each other by a vast variety of sources of contest. A couple of wives meeting in the street, and giving each other a wry look, or a look not quite civil enough, will, if the parties be hard pushed for a ground of contention, do pretty well. But in the country there is, alas! no such resource. Here are no walls for people to take of each other. Here they are so placed as to prevent the possibility of such lucky local contact. Here is more than room of every sort, elbow, leg, horse, or carriage, for them all. Even *at church* (most of the people being in the meeting-houses) the pews are surprisingly too large. Here, therefore, where all circumstances seem calculated to cause never-ceasing concord with its accompanying dullness, there would be no relief at all, were it not for the *game*. This, happily, supplies the place of all other sources of alternate dispute and reconciliation; it keeps all in life and motion, from the lord down to the hedger. When I see two men, whether in a market-

room, by the way-side, in a parlour, in a church-yard, or even in the church itself, engaged in manifestly deep and most momentous discourse, I will, if it be any time between September and February, bet ten to one that it is, in some way or other, about *the game*. The wives and daughters hear so much of it that they inevitably get engaged in the disputes; and thus all are kept in a state of vivid animation. I should like very much to be able to take a spot, a circle of 12 miles in diameter, and take an exact account of all the *time* spent by each individual, above the age of ten (that is the age they begin at), in talking, during the game season of one year, about the game and about sporting exploits. I verily believe that it would amount, upon an average, to six times as much as all the other talk put together; and, as to the anger, the satisfaction, the scolding, the commendation, the chagrin, the exultation, the envy, the emulation, where are there any of these in the country unconnected with *the game*?

There is, however, an important distinction to be made between *hunters* (including coursers) and *shooters*. The latter are, as far as relates to their exploits, a disagreeable class compared with the former; and the reason of this is, their doings are almost wholly their own; while, in the case of the others, the achievements are the property of the dogs. Nobody likes to hear another talk *much* in praise of his own acts, unless those acts have a manifest tendency to produce some good to the hearer; and shooters do talk *much* of their own exploits, and those exploits rather tend to *humiliate* the hearer. Then, a *greater shooter* will, nine times out of ten, go so far as almost to *lie a little*; and though people do not tell him of it, they do not like him the better for it; and he but too frequently discovers that they do not believe him; whereas, hunters are mere followers of the dogs, as mere spectators; their praises, if any are called for, are bestowed on the greyhounds, the hounds, the fox, the hare, or the horses. There is a little rivalry in the riding, or in the behaviour of the horses; but this has so little to do with the personal merit of the sportsmen, that it never produces a want of good fellowship in the evening of the day. A shooter who has been *missing* all day, must have an uncommon share of good sense not to feel mortified while the slaughterers are relating the adventures of that day; and this is what cannot

exist in the case of the hunters. Bring me into a room, with a dozen men in it, who have been sporting all day; or rather let me be in an adjoining room, where I can hear the sound of their voices, without being able to distinguish the words, and I will bet ten to one that I tell whether they be hunters or shooters.

I was once acquainted with a *famous shooter* whose name was William Ewing. He was a barrister of Philadelphia, but became far more renowned by his gun than by his law cases. We spent scores of days together a shooting, and were extremely well matched, I having excellent dogs and caring little about my reputation as a shot, his dogs being good for nothing, and he caring more about his reputation as a shot than as a lawyer. The fact which I am going to relate respecting this gentleman ought to be a warning to young men how they become enamoured of this species of vanity. We had gone about ten miles from our home, to shoot where partridges were said to be very plentiful. We found them so. In the course of a November day, he had, just before dark, shot, and sent to the farm-house, or kept in his bag, *ninety-nine* partridges. He made some few *double shots*, and he might have a *miss* or two, for he sometimes shot when out of my sight, on account of the woods. However, he said that he killed at every shot; and as he had counted the birds, when he went to dinner at the farm-house and when he cleaned his gun, he, just before sunset, knew that he had killed *ninety-nine* partridges, every one upon the wing, and a great part of them in woods very thickly set with largish trees. It was a grand achievement; but, unfortunately, he wanted to make it *a hundred*. The sun was setting, and, in that country, darkness comes almost at once; it is more like the going out of a candle than that of a fire; and I wanted to be off, as we had a very bad road to go, and as he, being under strict petticoat government, to which he most loyally and dutifully submitted, was compelled to get home that night, taking me with him, the vehicle (horse and gig) being mine. I, therefore, pressed him to come away, and moved on myself towards the house (that of old John Brown, in Bucks county, grandfather of that General Brown, who gave some of our whiskered heroes such a rough handling last war, which was waged for the purpose of "deposing James Madison"), at which house I would have stayed all night, but from which I



was compelled to go by that watchful government, under which he had the good fortune to live. Therefore I was in haste to be off. No: he would kill the *hundredth* bird! In vain did I talk of the bad road and its many dangers for want of moon. The poor partridges, which we had scattered about, were *calling* all around us; and, just at this moment, up got one under his feet, in a field, in which the wheat was three or four inches high. He shot and *missed*. "That's it," said he, running as if to *pick up* the bird. "What!" said I, "you don't think you *killed*, do you? Why there is the bird now, not only alive, but *calling* in that wood;" which was at about a hundred yards' distance. He, in that *form of words* usually employed in such cases, asserted that he shot the bird and saw it fall; and I, in much about the same form of words, asserted that he had *missed*, and that I, with my own eyes, saw the bird fly into the wood. This was too much! To *miss* once out of a hundred times! To lose such a chance of immortality! He was a good-humoured man; I liked him very much; and I could not help feeling for him, when he said, "Well, *sir*, I killed the bird; and if you choose to go away and take your dog away, so as to prevent me from *finding* it, you must do it; the dog is yours, to be sure." "The *dog*," said I, in a very mild tone, "why, Ewing, there is the spot; and could we not see it, upon this smooth green surface, if it were there?" However, he began to *look about*; and I called the dog, and affected to join him in the search. Pity for his weakness got the better of my dread of the bad road. After walking backward and forward many times upon about twenty yards square with our eyes to the ground, looking for what both of us knew was not there, I had passed him (he going one way and I the other), and I happened to be turning round just after I had passed him, when I saw him, putting his hand behind him, *take a partridge out of his bag and let it fall upon the ground*! I felt no temptation to detect him, but turned away my head, and kept looking about. Presently he, having returned to the spot where the bird was, called out to me, in a most triumphant tone, "*Here! here! Come here!*" I went up to him, and he, pointing with his finger down to the bird, and looking hard in my face at the same time, said, "There, Cobbett; I hope that will be a *warning* to you never to be obstinate again!" "Well," said I, "come along:" and away we went as merry as larks. When

we got to Brown's, he told them the story, triumphed over me most clamorously; and though he often repeated the story to my face, I never had the heart to let him know that I knew of the imposition, which puerile vanity had induced so sensible and honourable a man to be mean enough to practise.

A *professed shot* is, almost always, a very disagreeable brother sportsman. He must, in the first place, have a head rather of the emptiest to *pride himself* upon so poor a talent. Then he is always out of temper, if the game fail, or if he miss it. He never participates in that great delight which all sensible men enjoy at beholding the beautiful action, the docility, the zeal, the wonderful sagacity of the pointer and the setter. He is always thinking about *himself*: always anxious to surpass his companions. I remember that, once, Ewing and I had lost our dog. We were in a wood, and the dog had gone out and found a covey in a wheat stubble joining the wood. We had been whistling and calling him for, perhaps, half an hour or more. When we came out of the wood we saw him pointing, with one foot up; and soon after, he, keeping his foot and body unmoved, gently turned round his head towards the spot where he heard us, as if to bid us come on, and when he saw that we saw him, turned his head back again. I was so delighted that I stopped to look with admiration. Ewing, astonished at my want of alacrity, pushed on, shot one of the partridges, and thought no more about the conduct of the dog than if the sagacious creature had had nothing at all to do with the matter. When I left America, in 1800, I gave this dog to Lord Henry Stuart, who was, when he came home a year or two afterwards, about to bring him to astonish the sportsmen even in England; but those of Pennsylvania were resolved not to part with him, and therefore they *stole* him the night before his lordship came away. Lord Henry had plenty of pointers after his return, and he *saw* hundreds; but always declared that he never saw anything approaching in excellence this American dog. For the information of sportsmen I ought to say that this was a small-headed and sharp-nosed pointer, hair as fine as that of a greyhound, little and short ears, very light in the body, very long legged, and swift as a good lurcher. I had him a puppy, and he never had any *breaking*, but he pointed staunchly at once; and I am of opinion that this sort is, in all respects, better than the heavy breed. Mr Thornton

(I beg his pardon, I believe he is now a knight of some sort), who was, and perhaps still is, our envoy in Portugal, at the time here referred to was a sort of partner with Lord Henry in this famous dog; and gratitude (to the memory of *the dog* I mean) will, I am sure, or at least, I hope so, make him bear witness to the truth of my character of him; and if one could hear an ambassador *speak out*, I think that Mr Thornton would acknowledge that his calling has brought him in pretty close contact with many a man who was possessed of most tremendous political power, without possessing half the sagacity, half the understanding, of this dog, and without being a thousandth part so faithful to his trust.

I am quite satisfied that there are as many *sorts* of men as there are of dogs. Swift was a man, and so is Walter the base. But is the *sort* the same? It cannot be *education* alone that makes the amazing difference that we see. Besides, we see men of the very same rank and riches and education differing as widely as the pointer does from the pug. The name, *man*, is common to all the sorts, and hence arises very great mischief. What confusion must there be in rural affairs, if there were no names whereby to distinguish hounds, greyhounds, pointers, spaniels, terriers, and sheep dogs, from each other! And what pretty work if, without regard to the *sorts* of dogs, men were to attempt to *employ them*! Yet this is done in the case of *men*! A man is always *a man*; and without the least regard as to the *sort*, they are promiscuously placed in all kinds of situations. What would be said of the 'squire who should take a fox-hound out to find partridges for him to shoot at? Yet would this be *more* absurd than to set a man to law-making who was manifestly formed for the express purpose of sweeping the streets or digging out sewers?

FARNHAM, SURREY,

*Thursday, 27 Oct.*

We came over the heath from Thursley, this morning, on our way to Winchester. Mr Wyndham's fox-hounds are coming to Thursley on Saturday. More than three-fourths of all the interesting talk in that neighbourhood, for some days past, has been about this anxiously looked-for event. I have seen no man, or boy, who did not talk about it. There had been a false

report about it; the hounds did *not come*; and the anger of the disappointed people was very great. At last, however, the *authentic* intelligence came, and I left them all as happy as if all were young and all just going to be married. An abatement of my pleasure, however, on this joyous occasion was, that I brought away with me *one*, who was as eager as the best of them. Richard, though now only 11 years and 6 months old, had, it seems, one fox-hunt, in Herefordshire, last winter; and he actually has begun to talk rather *contemptuously* of hare hunting. To show me that he is in no *danger*, he has been leaping his horse over banks and ditches by the road side, all our way across the country from Reigate; and he joined with such glee in talking of the expected arrival of the fox-hounds that I felt some little pain at bringing him away. My engagement at Winchester is for Saturday; but if it had not been so, the deep and hidden ruts in the heath, in a wood in the midst of which the hounds are sure to find, and the immense concourse of horsemen that is sure to be assembled, would have made me bring him away. Upon the high, hard and open countries I should not be afraid for him, but here the danger would have been greater than it would have been right for me to suffer him to run.

We came hither by the way of Waverley Abbey and Moore Park. On the commons I showed Richard some of my old hunting scenes, when I was of his age, or younger, reminding him that I was obliged to hunt on foot. We got leave to go and see the grounds at Waverley where all the old monks' garden walls are totally gone, and where the spot is become a sort of lawn. I showed him the spot where the strawberry garden was, and where I, when sent to gather *hautboys*, used to eat every remarkably fine one, instead of letting it go to be eaten by Sir Robert Rich. I showed him a tree, close by the ruins of the Abbey, from a limb of which I once fell into the river, in an attempt to take the nest of a *crow*, which had artfully placed it upon a branch so far from the trunk as not to be able to bear the weight of a boy eight years old. I showed him an old elm-tree, which was hollow even then, into which I, when a very little boy, once saw a cat go, that was as big as a middle-sized spaniel dog, for relating which I got a great scolding, for standing to which I, at last, got a beating; but stand to which I still did. I have since many times repeated it; and I would take my oath of it to this

day. When in New Brunswick I saw the great wild grey cat, which is there called a *Lucifee*; and it seemed to me to be just such a cat as I had seen at Waverley. I found the ruins not very greatly diminished; but it is strange how small the mansion, and ground, and everything but the trees, appeared to me. They were all great to my mind when I saw them last; and that early impression had remained, whenever I had talked or thought of the spot; so that, when I came to see them again, after seeing the sea and so many other immense things, it seemed as if they had all been made small. This was not the case with regard to the trees, which are nearly as big here as they are any where else; and the old cat-elm, for instance, which Richard measured with his whip, is about 16 or 17 feet round.

From Waverley we went to Moore Park, once the seat of Sir William Temple, and when I was a very little boy, the seat of a lady, or a Mrs Temple. Here I showed Richard Mother Ludlum's Hole; but, alas! it is not the enchanting place that I knew it, nor that which Grose describes in his *Antiquities*! The semicircular paling is gone; the basins, to catch the never-ceasing little stream, are gone; the iron cups, fastened by chains, for people to drink out of, are gone; the pavement all broken to pieces; the seats for people to sit on, on both sides of the cave, torn up and gone; the stream that ran down a clean paved channel now making a dirty gutter; and the ground opposite, which was a grove, chiefly of laurels, intersected by closely mowed grass-walks, now become a poor, ragged-looking alder-coppice. Near the mansion, I showed Richard the hill upon which Dean Swift tells us he used to run for exercise while he was pursuing his studies here; and I would have showed him the garden-seat, under which Sir William Temple's heart was buried, agreeably to his will; but the seat was gone, also the wall at the back of it; and the exquisitely beautiful little lawn in which the seat stood was turned into a parcel of divers-shaped cockney-clumps, planted according to the strictest rules of artificial and refined vulgarity.

At Waverley, Mr Thompson, a merchant of some sort, has succeeded (after the monks) the Orby Hunters and Sir Robert Rich. At Moore Park, a Mr Laing, a West India planter or merchant, has succeeded the Temples; and at the castle of Farnham, which you see from Moore Park, Bishop Prettyman



Tomline has, at last, after perfectly regular and due gradations, succeeded William of Wykham! In coming up from Moore Park to Farnham town, I stopped opposite the door of a little old house, where there appeared to be a great parcel of children. "There, Dick," said I, "when I was just such a little creature as that whom you see in the door-way, I lived in this very house with my grandmother Cobbett." He pulled up his horse, and looked *very hard at it*, but said nothing, and on we came.

WINCHESTER,

*Sunday Noon, 30 Oct.*

We came away from Farnham about noon on Friday, promising Bishop Prettyman to notice him and his way of living more fully on our return. At Alton we got some bread and cheese at a friend's, and then came to Alresford by Medstead, in order to have fine turf to ride on, and to see on this lofty land that which is, perhaps, the finest *beech-wood* in all England. These high down countries are not garden plats, like Kent; but they have, from my first seeing them, when I was about *ten*, always been my delight. Large sweeping downs, and deep dells here and there, with villages amongst lofty trees, are my great delight. When we got to Alresford it was nearly dark, and not being able to find a room to our liking, we resolved to go, though in the dark, to Easton, a village about six miles from Alresford down by the side of the Hichen River.

## XVII

### *A Ride from Winchester to Burghclere*

FATHER and son set off about noon, though without breakfast, and adopt Cobbett's favourite plan of avoiding the turnpike roads and riding across country.

BURGHCLERE,

*Monday Morning, 31 October, 1825*

We had, or I had, resolved not to breakfast at Winchester yesterday: and yet we were detained till nearly noon. But at last off we came, *fasting*. The turnpike-road from Winchester to this place comes through a village called Sutton Scotney, and then through Whitchurch, which lies on the Andover and London road, through Basingstoke. We did not take the cross-turnpike till we came to Whitchurch. We went to King's Worthy; that is about two miles on the road from Winchester to London; and then, turning short to our left, came up upon the downs to the north of Winchester race-course. Here, looking back at the city and at the fine valley above and below it, and at the many smaller valleys that run down from the high ridges into that great and fertile valley, I could not help admiring the taste of the ancient kings, who made this city (which once covered all the hill round about, and which contained 92 churches and chapels) a chief place of their residence. There are not many finer spots in England; and if I were to take in a circle of eight or ten miles of semi-diameter, I should say that I believe there is not one so fine. Here are hill, dell, water, meadows, woods, corn-fields, downs: and all of them very fine and very beautifully disposed. This country does not present to us that sort of beauties which we see about Guildford and Godalming, and round the skirts of Hindhead and Blackdown, where the ground lies in the form that the surface-water in a boiling copper would be in, if you could, by word of command, *make it be still*, the variously-shaped bubbles all sticking up; and really, to look at the face of the earth, who can help imagining that some such process has produced its present form? Leaving this matter to be solved by those who laugh at

mysteries, I repeat, that the country round Winchester does not present to us beauties of *this sort*; but of a sort which I like a great deal better. Arthur Young calls the vale between Farnham and Alton *the finest ten miles* in England. Here is a river with fine meadows on each side of it, and with rising grounds on each outside of the meadows, those grounds having some hop-gardens and some pretty woods. But, though I was born in this vale, I must confess that the ten miles between Maidstone and Tunbridge (which the Kentish folks call the *Garden of Eden*) is a great deal finer; for here, with a river three times as big, and a vale three times as broad, there are, on rising grounds six times as broad, not only hop-gardens and beautiful woods, but immense orchards of apples, pears, plums, cherries and filberts, and these, in many cases, with gooseberries and currants and raspberries beneath; and, all taken together, the vale is really worthy of the appellation which it bears. But even this spot, which I believe to be the very finest, as to fertility and diminutive beauty, in this whole world, I, for my part, do not like so well; nay, as a spot to *live on*, I think nothing at all of it, compared with a country where high downs prevail, with here and there a large wood on the top or the side of a hill, and where you see, in the deep dells, here and there a farmhouse, and here and there a village, the buildings sheltered by a group of lofty trees.

This is my taste, and here, in the north of Hampshire, it has its full gratification. I like to look at the winding side of a great down, with two or three numerous flocks of sheep on it, belonging to different farms; and to see, lower down, the folds, in the fields, ready to receive them for the night. We had, when we got upon the downs, after leaving Winchester, this sort of country all the way to Whitchurch. Our point of destination was this village of Burghclere, which lies close under the north side of the lofty hill at Highclere, which is called Beacon-hill, and on the top of which there are still the marks of a Roman encampment. We saw this hill as soon as we got on Winchester downs; and without any regard to *roads*, we *steered* for it, as sailors do for a land-mark. Of these 13 miles (from Winchester to Whitchurch) we rode about eight or nine upon the *green-sward*, or over fields equally smooth. And here is one great pleasure of living in countries of this sort: no sloughs, no

ditches, no nasty dirty lanes, and the hedges, where there are any, are more for boundary marks than for fences. Fine for hunting and coursing: no impediments; no gates to open; nothing to impede the dogs, the horses, or the view. The water is not *seen running*; but the great bed of chalk *holds it*, and the sun draws it up for the benefit of the grass and the corn; and whatever inconvenience is experienced from the necessity of deep wells, and of driving sheep and cattle far to water, is amply made up for by the goodness of the water, and by the complete absence of floods, of drains, of ditches and of water-furrows. As *things now are*, however, these countries have one great draw-back: the poor day-labourers suffer from the want of fuel, and they have nothing but their *bare pay*. For these reasons they are greatly worse off than those of the *woodland countries*; and it is really surprising what a difference there is between the faces that you see here, and the round, red faces that you see in the *wealds* and the *forests*, particularly in Sussex, where the labourers *will* have a *meat-pudding* of some sort or other; and where they *will* have a *fire* to sit by in the winter.

After steering for some time, we came down to a very fine farm-house, which we stopped a little to admire; and I asked Richard whether *that* was not a place to be happy in. The village, which we found to be Stoke-Charity, was about a mile lower down this little vale. Before we got to it, we overtook the owner of the farm, who knew me, though I did not know him; but when I found it was Mr Hinton Bailey, of whom and whose farm I had heard so much, I was not at all surprised at the fineness of what I had just seen. I told him that the word *charity*, making, as it did, part of the name of this place, had nearly inspired me with boldness enough to go to the farm-house, in the ancient style, and ask for something to eat; for that we had not yet breakfasted. He asked us to go back; but at Burghclere we were *resolved to dine*. After, however, crossing the village, and beginning again to ascend the downs, we came to a labourer's (*once a farm-house*), where I asked the man whether he had any *bread and cheese*, and was not a little pleased to hear him say "Yes." Then I asked him to give us a bit, protesting that we had not yet broken our fast. He answered in the affirmative, at once, though I did not talk of payment. His wife brought out the cut loaf, and a piece of

Wiltshire cheese, and I took them in hand, gave Richard a good hunch, and took another for myself. I verily believe that all the pleasure of eating enjoyed by all the feeders in London in a whole year does not equal that which we enjoyed in gnawing this bread and cheese, as we rode over this cold down, whip and bridle-reins in one hand, and the hunch in the other. Richard, who was purse bearer, gave the woman, by my direction, about enough to buy two quartern loaves: for she told me that they had to buy their bread *at the mill*, not being able to bake themselves for *want of fuel*; and this, as I said before, is one of the draw-backs in this sort of country. I wish every one of these people had an *American fireplace*. Here they might then, even in these bare countries, have comfortable warmth. Rubbish of any sort would, by this means, give them warmth. I am now, at six o'clock in the morning, sitting in a room where one of these fireplaces, with very light *turf* in it, gives as good and steady a warmth as it is possible to feel, and which room has, too, been *cured of smoking* by this fireplace.

Before we got this supply of bread and cheese, we, though in ordinary times a couple of singularly jovial companions, and seldom going a hundred yards (except going very fast) without one or the other speaking, began to grow *dull*, or rather *glum*. The way seemed long; and, when I had to speak in answer to Richard, the speaking was as brief as might be. Unfortunately, just at this critical period, one of the loops that held the straps of Richard's little portmanteau broke; and it became necessary (just before we overtook Mr Bailey) for me to fasten the portmanteau on before me, upon my saddle. This, which was not the work of more than five minutes, would, had I had a *breakfast*, have been nothing at all, and, indeed, matter of laughter. But, *now*, it was *something*. It was his "*fault*" for capering and jerking about "*so*." I jumped off, saying, "*Here!* I'll carry it *myself*." And then I began to take off the remaining strap, pulling with great violence and in great haste. Just at this time my eyes met his, in which I saw *great surprise*; and, feeling the just rebuke, feeling heartily ashamed of myself, I instantly changed my tone and manner, cast the blame upon the saddler, and talked of the effectual means which we would take to prevent the like in future.

Now, if such was the effect produced upon me by the want of



food for only two or three hours; me, who had dined well the day before and eaten toast and butter the over-night; if the missing of only one breakfast, and that, too, from my own whim, while I had money in my pocket, to get one at any public-house, and while I could get one only for asking for at any farm-house; if the not having breakfasted could, and under such circumstances, make me what you may call "*cross*" to a child like this, whom I must necessarily love so much, and to whom I never speak but in the very kindest manner; if this mere absence of a breakfast could thus put me *out of temper*, how great are the allowances that we ought to make for the poor creatures who, in this once happy and now miserable country, are doomed to lead a life of constant labour and of half-starvation. I suppose that, as we rode away from the cottage, we gnawed up, between us, a pound of bread and a quarter of a pound of cheese. Here was about *five-pence* worth at present prices. Even this, which was only a mere *snap*, a mere *stay-stomach*, for us, would, for us two, come to 3s. a week all but a penny. How, then, gracious God! is a labouring man, his wife, and, perhaps, four or five small children, to exist upon 8s. or 9s. a week! Aye, and to find house-rent, clothing, bedding and fuel out of it? Richard and I ate here, at his snap, more, and much more, than the average of labourers, their wives and children, have to eat in a whole day, and that the labourer has to *work* on too!

Then, with the aid of small capitals, italics, and large capitals, Cobbett proceeds to attack this question of the poverty of the labouring classes. Humanitarians concern themselves with the abolition of negro slavery. Yet in England the condition of rural workers is worse than slavery. It is not education they need, says Cobbett, but food and clothing. "The causes are these: the tax-gatherer presses the landlord; the landlord the farmer; and the farmer the labourer." The Press, the Government, the Opposition, the Penal Code—all are arraigned for their part in upholding the "infernal funding and taxing system."

He returns for a brief space to the description of their ride:

Just after we had finished the bread and cheese, we crossed the turnpike-road that goes from Basingstoke to Stockbridge; and Mr Bailey had told us that we were then to bear away to our right, and go to the end of a wood (which we saw one end of), and keep round with that wood, or coppice, as he called it, to our

left; but we, seeing Beacon Hill more to the left, and resolving to go, as nearly as possible, in a straight line to it, steered directly over the fields; that is to say, pieces of ground from 30 to 100 acres in each. But a hill which we had to go over, had here hidden from our sight a part of this "coppice," which consists, perhaps, of 150 or 200 acres, and which we found sweeping round, in a crescent-like form so far, from towards our left, as to bring our land-mark over the coppice at about the mid-length of the latter. Upon this discovery we slackened sail; for this coppice might be a mile across; and though the bottom was sound enough, being a coverlet of flints upon a bed of chalk, the under-wood was too high and too thick for us to face, being, as we were, at so great a distance from the means of obtaining a fresh supply of clothes. Our leather leggings would have stood anything; but our coats were of the common kind; and before we saw the other side of the coppice we should, I dare say, have been as ragged as forest-ponies in the month of March.

In this dilemma I stopped, and looked at the coppice. Luckily two boys, who had been cutting sticks (to *sell*, I dare say, at least *I hope so*), made their appearance, at about half a mile off on the side for the coppice. Richard galloped off to the boys, from whom he found that, in one part of the coppice, there was a road cut across, the point of entrance into which road they explained to him. This was to us what the discovery of a canal across the isthmus of Darien would be to a ship in the Gulf of Mexico wanting to get into the Pacific without doubling Cape Horn. A beautiful road we found it. I should suppose the best part of a mile long, perfectly straight, the surface sound and smooth, about eight feet wide, the whole length seen at once, and, when you are at one end, the other end seeming to be hardly a yard wide. When we got about half way, we found a road that crossed this. These roads are, I suppose, cut for the hunters. They are very pretty, at any rate, and we found this one very convenient; for it cut our way short by a full half mile.

Seeing once more at Whitchurch the stream on which stands the mill where the paper for bank-notes is made, Cobbett is off again on the topic of paper money and the way in which it has changed rural England, "raising up new families and pulling down old ones." He gives numerous examples, drawn from a limited area, of estates that have passed into new hands. It is the "small

gentry," he contends, that are most affected—"all gone, nearly to a man, and the small farmers along with them."

He continues his Journal on the following Sunday:

BURGHCLERE,

*Sunday Morning, 6 November*

It has been fine all the week, until to-day, when we intended to set off for Hurstbourn-Tarrant, vulgarly called Uphusband, but the rain seems as if it would stop us. From Whitchurch to within two miles of this place, it is the same sort of country as between Winchester and Whitchurch. High, chalk bottom, open downs or large fields, with here and there a farm-house in a dell, sheltered by lofty trees, which, to my taste, is the most pleasant situation in the world.

This has been, with Richard, one whole week of hare-hunting, and with me, three days and a half. The weather has been amongst the finest that I ever saw, and Lord Caernarvon's preserves fill the country with hares, while these hares invite us to ride about and to see his park and estate, at this fine season of the year, in every direction. We are now on the north side of that Beacon Hill for which we steered last Sunday. This makes part of a chain of lofty chalk-hills and downs, which divides all the lower part of Hampshire from Berkshire, though the ancient ruler, owner, of the former took a little strip all along, on the flat, on this side of the chain, in order, I suppose, to make the ownership of the hills themselves the more clear of all dispute; just as the owner of a field-hedge and bank owns also the ditch on his neighbour's side. From these hills you look, at one view, over the whole of Berkshire, into Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and you can see the Isle of Wight and the sea. On this north side the chalk soon ceases, the sand and clay begin, and the oak-woods cover a great part of the surface. Amongst these is the farm-house in which we are, and from the warmth and good fare of which we do not mean to stir until we can do it without the chance of a wet skin.

The rain gives Cobbett an opportunity to read the accumulated newspapers and he comments at some length on the various items of news. A believer in woollen clothing, he rejoices at difficulties in the cotton market. He ridicules Huskisson's attempts to establish some amount of free trade with France, and finally deals with the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws.

## XVIII

### *A Ride from Burghclere to Petersfield*

COBBETT is fond of downland scenery, and always has a keen eye for its characteristic beauties, particularly the flocks of sheep with which the hillsides are dotted :

HURSTBOURN TARRANT (OR UPHUSBAND),

*Monday, 7 November, 1825*

We came off from Burghclere yesterday afternoon, crossing Lord Caernarvon's park, going out of it on the west side of Beacon Hill, and sloping away to our right over the downs towards Woodcote. The afternoon was singularly beautiful. The downs (even the poorest of them) are perfectly green; the sheep on the downs look, this year, like fatting sheep: we came through a fine flock of ewes, and, looking round us, we saw, all at once, seven flocks, on different parts of the downs, each flock on an average containing at least 500 sheep.

It is about six miles from Burghclere to this place; and we made it about twelve; not in order to avoid the turnpike-road; but because we do not ride about to *see* turnpike-roads; and, moreover, because I had seen this most monstrously hilly turnpike-road before. We came through a village called Woodcote, and another called Binley. I never saw any inhabited places more recluse than these.

Yet even to such remote spots taxation finds its way and Cobbett is incensed by the sight of a notice "Licensed to deal in tea and tobacco."

EASTON, NEAR WINCHESTER,

*Wednesday Evening, 9 Nov.*

I intended to go from Uphusband to Stonehenge, thence to Old Sarum, and thence through the New Forest, to Southampton and Botley, and thence across into Sussex, to see Up-Park, and Cowdry House. But, then, there must be no loss of

time: I must adhere to a certain route as strictly as a regiment on a march. I had written the route: and Laverstock, after seeing Stonehenge and Old Sarum, was to be the resting-place of yesterday (Tuesday); but when it came, it brought rain with it after a white frost on Monday. It was likely to rain again to-day. It became necessary to change the route, as I must get to London by a certain day; and as the first day, on the new route, brought us here.

I had been three times at Uphusband before, and had, as my readers will, perhaps, recollect, described the bourn here, or the *brook*. It has, in general, no water at all in it from August to March. There is the bed of a little river; but no water. In March, or thereabouts, the water begins to boil up, in thousands upon thousands of places, in the little narrow meadows, just above the village; that is to say a little higher up the valley. When the chalk hills are full; when the chalk will hold no more water; then it comes out at the lowest spots near these immense hills and becomes a rivulet first, and then a river. But until this visit to Uphusband (or Hurstbourn Tarrant, as the map calls it), little did I imagine that this rivulet, dry half the year, was the head of the river Teste, which, after passing through Stockbridge and Rumsey, falls into the sea near Southampton.

We had to follow the bed of this river to Bourne; but there the water begins to appear; and it runs all the year long about a mile lower down. Here it crosses Lord Portsmouth's out-park, and our road took us the same way to the village called Down Husband, the scene (as the broadsheet tells us) of so many of that noble lord's ringing and cart-driving exploits. Here we crossed the London and Andover road, and leaving Andover to our right and Whitchurch to our left, we came on to Long Parish, where, crossing the water, we came up again on that high country which continues all across to Winchester. After passing Bullington, Sutton, and Wonston, we veered away from Stoke Charity, and came across the fields to the high down, whence you see Winchester, or rather the cathedral; for, at this distance, you can distinguish nothing else clearly.

The pleasure he derived from the Duke of Buckingham's estate proves the advantages of horseback as a means of seeing the countryside:



## PETERSFIELD,

*Friday Evening, 11 November*

We lost another day at Easton; the whole of yesterday it having rained the whole day; so that we could not have come an inch but in the wet. We started, therefore, this morning, coming through the Duke of Buckingham's park, at Avington, which is close by Easton, and on the same side of the Itchen. This is a very beautiful place. The house is close down at the edge of the meadow land; there is a lawn before it, and a pond supplied by the Itchen, at the end of the lawn, and bounded by the park on the other side. The high road, through the park, goes very near to this water; and we saw thousands of wild-ducks in the pond, or sitting round on the green edges of it, while, on one side of the pond, the hares and pheasants were moving about upon a gravel walk on the side of a very fine plantation. We looked down upon all this from a rising ground, and the water, like a looking-glass, showed us the trees, and even the animals. This is certainly one of the very prettiest spots in the world. The wild water-fowl seem to take particular delight in this place. There are a great many at Lord Caernarvon's; but there the water is much larger, and the ground and wood about it comparatively rude and coarse. Here, at Avington, everything is in such beautiful order; the lawn before the house is of the finest green, and most neatly kept; and the edge of the pond (which is of several acres) is as smooth as if it formed part of a bowling-green. To see so many *wild-fowl*, in a situation where everything is in the *parterre*-order, has a most pleasant effect on the mind; and Richard and I, like Pope's cock in the farm-yard, could not help *thanking* the duke and duchess for having generously made such ample provision for our pleasure, and that, too, merely to please us as we were passing along. Now this is the advantage of going about on *horseback*. On foot, the fatigue is too great, and you go too slowly. In any sort of carriage, you cannot get into the *real country places*. To travel in stage coaches is to be hurried along by force, in a box, with an air-hole in it, and constantly exposed to broken limbs, the *danger* being much greater than that of ship-board, and the *noise* much more disagreeable, while the *company* is frequently not a great deal more to one's liking.

From this beautiful spot we had to mount gradually the downs to the southward; but it is impossible to quit the vale of the Itchen without one more look back at it. To form a just estimate of its real value, and that of the lands near it, it is only necessary to know that, from its source, at Bishop's Sutton, this river has, on its two banks, in the distance of nine miles (before it reaches Winchester) thirteen parish churches. There must have been some *people* to erect these churches. It is not true, then, that Pitt and George III *created the English nation*, notwithstanding all that the Scotch *feelosofers* are ready to swear about the matter. In short, there can be no doubt in the mind of any rational man that in the time of the Plantagenets England was more populous than it is now.

When we began to get up towards the downs we, to our great surprise, saw them covered with *snow*. "Sad times coming on for poor Sir Glory," said I to Richard. "Why?" said Dick. It was too cold to talk much; and, besides, a great sluggishness in his horse made us both rather serious. The horse had been too hard ridden at Burghclere, and had got cold. This made us change our route again, and instead of going over the down towards Hambledon, in our way to see the park and the innumerable hares and pheasants of Sir Harry Featherstone, we pulled away more to the left, to go through Bramdean, and so on to Petersfield, contracting greatly our intended circuit. And besides, I had never seen Bramdean, the spot on which, it is said, Alfred fought his last great and glorious battle with the Danes. A fine country for a battle, sure enough!

A little to our right, as we came along, we left the village of Kimston, where Squire Græme once lived, as was before related. Here, too, lived a Squire Ridge, a famous fox-hunter, at a great mansion, now used as a farm-house; and it is curious enough that this squire's son-in-law, one Gunner, an attorney at Bishop's Waltham, is steward to the man who now owns the estate.

Before we got to Petersfield, we called at an old friend's and got some bread and cheese and small beer, which we preferred to strong. In approaching Petersfield we began to descend from the high chalk-country, which (with the exception of the valleys of the Itchen and the Teste) had lasted us from Uphusband (almost the north-west point of the county) to this place,

which is not far from the south-east point of it. Here we quit flint and chalk and downs, and take to sand, clay, hedges, and coppices; and here, on the verge of Hampshire, we begin again to see those endless little bubble-formed hills that we before saw round the foot of Hindhead. We have got in in very good time, and got, at the Dolphin, good stabling for our horses. The waiters and people at inns *look so hard at us* to see us so liberal as to horse-feed, fire, candle, beds, and room, while we are so very very sparing in the article of *drink*! They seem to pity our taste. I hear people complain of the "exorbitant charges" at inns; but my wonder always is how the people can live with charging so little. Except in one single instance, I have uniformly, since I have been from home, thought the charges too low for people to live by.

And he concludes the day with more newspaper reading and the typical Cobbett comments on current affairs that always follow such an operation.

## XIX

### *A Ride from Petersfield to Kensington*

COBBETT and Richard commence their ride home on the morning following their arrival in Petersfield. They are compelled to modify their intended route owing to the condition of Richard's horse. Soon after leaving Petersfield they find an example of the low rate of prevailing agricultural wages. In his reference to "Huntingdon" in the first sentence, Cobbett seems to have made a slip for what should read "Horsham."

PETWORTH,

*Saturday, 12 Nov. 1825*

I was at this town in the summer of 1823, when I crossed Sussex from Worth to Huntingdon, in my way to Titchfield in Hampshire. We came this morning from Petersfield, with an intention to cross to Horsham, and go thence to Worth, and then into Kent; but Richard's horse seemed not to be fit for so strong a bout, and therefore we resolved to bend our course homewards, and first of all to fall back upon our resources at Thursley, which we intend to reach to-morrow, going through North Chapel, Chiddingfold, and Brook.

At about four miles from Petersfield we passed through a village called Rogate. Just before we came to it, I asked a man who was hedging on the side of the road how much he got a day. He said, 1s. 6d.: and he told me that the *allowed* wages was 7d. a day for the man *and a gallon loaf a week for the rest of his family*; that is to say, one pound and two and a quarter ounces of bread for each of them; and nothing more! And this, observe, is one-third short of the bread allowance of gaols, to say nothing of the meat and clothing and lodging of the inhabitants of gaols. If the man have full work; if he get his eighteen-pence a day, the whole nine shillings does not purchase a gallon loaf each for a wife and three children, and two gallon loaves for himself. In the gaols, the convicted felons have a pound and a half each of bread a day to begin with; they have some meat generally, and it has been found absolutely

necessary to allow them meat when they work at the tread-mill. It is impossible to make them work at the tread-mill without it. However, let us take the bare allowance of bread allowed in the gaols. This allowance is, for five people, fifty-two pounds and a half in the week; whereas, the man's nine shillings will buy but fifty-two pounds of bread; and this, observe, is a vast deal better than the state of things in the north of Hampshire, where the day-labourer gets but eight shillings a week. I asked this man how much a day they gave to a young able man who had no family, and who was compelled to come to the parish-officers for work. Observe, that there are a great many young men in this situation, because the farmers will not employ single men *at full wages*, these full wages being wanted for the married man's family, just to keep them alive according to the calculation that we have just seen. About the borders of the north of Hampshire they give to these single men two gallon loaves a week, or, in money, two shillings and eightpence, and nothing more. Here, in this part of Sussex, they give the single man sevenpence a day, that is to say, enough to buy two pounds and a quarter of bread for six days in the week, and as he does not work on the Sunday, there is no sevenpence allowed for the Sunday, and of course nothing to eat: and this is the allowance, settled by the magistrates, for a young, hearty, labouring man; and that, too, in the part of England where, I believe, they live better than in any other part of it. The poor creature here has sevenpence a day for six days in the week to find him food, clothes, washing, and lodging! It is just sevenpence, less than one half of what the meanest foot soldier in the standing army receives; besides that the latter has clothing, candle, fire, and lodging into the bargain! Well may we call our happy state of things the "envy of surrounding nations, and the admiration of the world!" We hear of the efforts of Mrs Fry, Mr Buxton, and numerous other persons to improve the situation of felons in the gaols; but never, no never, do we catch them ejaculating one single pious sigh for these innumerable sufferers, who are doomed to become felons or to waste away their bodies by hunger.

They ride on through Rogate and Trotton to Midhurst, where they "bait" their horses and enter Cowdray Park "to see the ruins of that once noble mansion":



We entered the park through a great iron gate-way, part of which being wanting, the gap was stopped up by a hurdle. We rode down to the house and all round about and in amongst the ruins, now in part covered with ivy, and inhabited by innumerable starlings and jackdaws. The last possessor was, I believe, that Lord Montague who was put an end to by the celebrated *nautical adventure* on the Rhine along with the brother of Sir Glory. These two sensible worthies took it into their heads to go down a place something resembling the waterfall of an overshot mill. They were drowned just as two young kittens or two young puppies would have been. It was this Lord Montague, I believe, who had this ancient and noble mansion completely repaired, and fitted up as a place of residence: and a few days, or a very few weeks, at any rate, after the work was completed, the house was set on fire (by accident, I suppose), and left nearly in the state in which it now stands, except that the ivy has grown up about it, and partly hidden the stones from our sight. You may see, however, the hour of the day or night at which the fire took place; for there still remains the brass of the face of the clock, and the hand pointing to the hour. Close by this mansion there runs a little river which runs winding away through the valleys, and at last falls into the Arron. After viewing the ruins, we had to return into the turnpike-road, and then enter another part of the park, which we crossed, in order to go to Petworth. When you are in a part of this road through the park, you look down and see the house in the middle of a very fine valley, the distant boundary of which, to the south and south-west, is the South Down Hills. Some of the trees here are very fine, particularly some most magnificent rows of the Spanish chestnut. I asked the people at Midhurst where Mr Poyntz himself lived; and they told me at the *lodge* in the park, which lodge was formerly the residence of the head keeper. The land is very good about here. It is fine rich loam at top, with clay further down. It is good for all sorts of trees, and they seem to grow here very fast.

Petworth is reached fairly early in the day and the two travellers spend the night there. On the Sunday Richard's horse has recovered, and they set off, riding through Lord Egremont's estate:

THURSLEY,  
*Sunday, 13 Nov.*

To our great delight we found Richard's horse quite well this morning, and off we set for this place. The first part of our road, for about three miles and a half, was through Lord Egremont's park. The morning was very fine; the sun shining; a sharp frost after a foggy evening; the grass all white, the twigs of the trees white, the ponds frozen over; and everything looking exceedingly beautiful. The spot itself being one of the very finest in the world, not excepting, I dare say, that of the father of Saxe Cobourg itself, who has, doubtless, many such fine places.

In a very fine pond, not far from the house and close by the road, there are some little artificial islands, upon one of which I observed an arbutus loaded with its beautiful fruit (quite ripe) even more thickly than any one I ever saw even in America. There were, on the side of the pond, a most numerous and beautiful collection of water-fowl, foreign as well as domestic. I never saw so great a variety of water-fowl collected together in my life. They had been ejected from the water by the frost, and were sitting apparently in a state of great dejection: but this circumstance had brought them into a comparatively small compass; and we facing our horses about, sat and looked at them, at the pond, at the grass, at the house, till we were tired of admiring. Everything here is in the neatest and most beautiful state. Endless herds of deer, of all the varieties of colours; and what adds greatly to your pleasure in such a case, you see comfortable retreats prepared for them in different parts of the woods. When we came to what we thought the end of the park, the gate-keeper told us that we should find other walls to pass through. We now entered upon woods, we then came to another wall, and there we entered upon farms to our right and to our left. At last we came to a third wall, and the gate in that let us out into the turnpike-road. The gate-keeper here told us that the whole enclosure was *nine miles round*; and this, after all, forms, probably, not a quarter part of what this nobleman possesses. And is it wrong that one man should possess so much? By no means; but in my opinion it is wrong that a system should exist which compels this man to have his estate

taken away from him unless he throw the junior branches of his family for maintenance upon the public.

Their route then lies through North Chapel and Chiddingfold. At the latter place are some "pretty establishments"—buildings and "monstrous fences, erected at enormous expense" as a factory for gunpowder, but now given up, though practically new.

Cobbett is as determined as ever to leave the turnpike road and is amply rewarded for his persistence :

We had now come on the turnpike-road from my Lord Egremont's park to Chiddingfold. I had made two or three attempts to get out of it, and to bear away to the north-west, to get through the oak-woods to Thursley; but I was constantly prevented by being told that the road which I wished to take would lead me to Haslemere. If you talk to ostlers, or landlords, or post-boys; or, indeed, to almost anybody else, they mean by a *road a turnpike-road*; and they positively will not talk to you about any other. Now, just after quitting Chiddingfold, Thursley lies over fine woods and coppices, in a north-west direction, or thereabouts; and the turnpike-road, which goes from Petworth to Godalming, goes in a north-north-east direction. I was resolved, be the consequences what they might, not to follow the turnpike-road one single inch further; for I had not above three miles or thereabouts to get to Thursley, through the woods; and I had, perhaps, six miles at least to get to it the other way; but the great thing was to see the interior of these woods; to see the stems of the trees, as well as the tops of them. I saw a lane opening in the right direction; I saw indeed that my horses must go up to their knees in clay; but I resolved to enter and go along that lane, and long before the end of my journey I found myself most amply compensated for the toil that I was about to encounter. But talk of toil! It was the horse that had the toil; and I had nothing to do but to sit upon his back, turn my head from side to side and admire the fine trees in every direction. Little bits of fields and meadows here and there, shaded all over, or nearly all over, by the surrounding trees. Here and there a labourer's house buried in the woods. We had drawn out our luncheons and eaten them while the horses took us through the clay; but I stopped at a little house and asked the woman, who looked very clean and nice, whether she would let us dine with her.

She said "Yes," with all her heart, but that she had no place to put our horses in, and that her dinner would not be ready for an hour, when she expected her husband home from church. She said they had a bit of bacon and a pudding and some cabbage; but that she had not much bread in the house. She had only one child, and that was not very old, so we left her, quite convinced that my old observation is true, that people in the woodland countries are best off, and that it is absolutely impossible to reduce them to that state of starvation in which they are in the corn-growing part of the kingdom. Here is that great blessing, abundance of fuel at all times of the year, and particularly in the winter.

We came on for about a mile further in these clayey lanes, when we renewed our inquiries as to our course, as our road now seemed to point towards Godalming again. I asked a man how I should get to Thursley? He pointed to some fir-trees upon a hill, told me I must go by them, and that there was no other way. "Where then," said I, "is Thursley?" He pointed with his hand, and said, "Right over those woods; but there is no road there, and it is impossible for you to get through those woods." "Thank you," said I; "but through those woods we mean to go." Just at the border of the woods I saw a cottage. There must be some way to that cottage; and we soon found a gate that let us into a field, across which we went to this cottage. We there found an old man and a young one. Upon inquiry we found that it was *possible* to get through these woods. Richard gave the old man threepence to buy a pint of beer, and I gave the young one a shilling to pilot us through the woods. These were oak-woods with underwood beneath; and there was a little stream of water running down the middle of the woods, the annual and long overflowings of which has formed a meadow sometimes a rod wide, and sometimes twenty rods wide, while the bed of the stream itself was the most serpentine that can possibly be imagined, describing, in many places, nearly a complete circle, going round for many rods together, and coming within a rod or two of a point that it had passed before. I stopped the man several times to sit and admire this beautiful spot, shaded in great part by lofty and wide-spreading oak-trees. We had to cross this brook several times, over bridges that the owner had erected for the convenience

of the fox-hunters. At last, we came into an ash-coppice, which had been planted in regular rows, at about four feet distances, which had been once cut, and which was now in the state of six years' growth. A road through it, made for the fox-hunters, was as straight as a line, and of so great a length that, on entering it, the further end appeared not to be a foot wide. Upon seeing this, I asked the man whom these coppices belonged to, and he told me to Squire Leech, at Lea. My surprise ceased, but my admiration did not.

A piece of ordinary coppice ground, close adjoining this, and with no timber in it, and upon just the same soil (if there had been such a piece), would, at ten years' growth, be worth, at present prices, from five to seven pounds the acre. This coppice, at ten years' growth, will be worth twenty pounds the acre; and, at the next cutting, when the stems will send out so many more shoots, it will be worth thirty pounds the acre. I did not ask the question when I afterwards saw Mr Leech, but, I dare say, the ground was trenched before it was planted; but what is that expense when compared with the great, the permanent profit of such an undertaking! And, above all things, what a convenient species of property does a man here create. Here are no tenants' rack, no anxiety about crops and seasons; the rust and the mildew never come here; a man knows what he has got, and he knows that nothing short of an earthquake can take it from him, unless, indeed, by attempting to vie with the stock-jobber in the expense of living, he enable the stock-jobber to come and perform the office of the earthquake. Mr Leech's father planted, I think it was, forty acres of such coppice in the same manner; and, at the same time, he *sowed the ground with acorns*. The acorns have become oak-trees, and have begun and made great progress in diminishing the value of the ash, which have now to contend against the shade and the roots of the oak. For present profit, and, indeed, for permanent profit, it would be judicious to grub up the oak; but the owner has determined otherwise. He cannot endure the idea of destroying an oak wood.

If such be the profit of planting ash, what would be the profit of planting locust, even for poles or stakes? The locust would outgrow the ash, we as have seen in the case of Mr Gunter's plantation, more than three to one. I am satisfied that it will



do this upon any soil, if you give the trees fifteen years to grow in; and, in short, that the locusts will be trees when the ash are merely poles, if both are left to grow up in single stems. If in coppice, the locust will make as good poles; I mean as large and as long poles in six years as the ash will in ten years: to say nothing of the superior durability of the locust. I have seen locusts, at Mr Knowles's, at Thursley, sufficient for a hop-pole, for an ordinary hop-pole, with only five years' growth in them, and leaving the last year's growth to be cut off, leaving the top of the pole three quarters of an inch through. There is nothing that we have ever heard of, of the timber kind, equal to this in point of quickness of growth. In parts of the country where hop-poles are not wanted, espalier stakes, wood for small fencing, hedge stakes, hurdle stakes, fold-shores, as the people call them, are always wanted; and is it not better to have a thing that will last twenty years than a thing that will last only three? I know of no English underwood which gives a hedge stake to last even *two years*. I should think that a very profitable way of employing the locust would be this. Plant a coppice, the plants two feet apart. Thus planted, the trees will protect one another against the wind. Keep the side shoots pruned off. At the end of six years, the coppice, if well planted and managed, will be, at the very least, twenty feet high to the tips of the trees. Not if the grass and weeds are suffered to grow up to draw all the moisture up out of the ground, to keep the air from the young plants, and to intercept the gentle rains and the dews; but trenched ground, planted carefully, and kept clean; and always bearing in mind that hares and rabbits and young locust trees will never live together; for the hares and rabbits will not only bite them off; but will gnaw them down to the ground, and, when they have done that, will scratch away the ground to gnaw into the very root. A gentleman bought some locust trees of me last year, and brought me a dismal account in the summer of their being all dead; but I have since found that they were all eaten up by the hares. He saw some of my refuse; some of those which were too bad to send to him, which were a great deal higher than his head. His ground was as good as mine, according to his account; but I had no hares to fight against; or else mine would have been all dead too.

I say, then, that a locust plantation, in pretty good land, well

managed, would be twenty feet high in six years; suppose it, however, to be only fifteen, there would be, at the bottom, wood to make two locust PINS for ship-building; two locust pins at the bottom of each tree. Two at the very least; and here would be twenty-two thousand locust pins to the acre, probably enough for the building of a seventy-four gun ship. These pins are about eighteen inches long, and, perhaps, an inch and half through; and there is this surprising quality in the wood of the locust, that it is just as hard and as durable at five or six years' growth as it is at fifty years' growth. Of which I can produce an abundance of instances. The *stake* which I brought home from America, and which is now at Fleet Street, had stood as a stake for about eight-and-twenty years, as certified to me by Judge Mitchell, of North Hampstead in Long Island, who gave me the stake, and who said to me at the time, "Now are you really going to take that crooked miserable stick to England!" Now it is pretty well known, at least I have been so informed, that our government have sent to America in consequence of my writings about the locust to endeavour to get locust pins for the navy. I have been informed that they have been told that the American government has bought them all up. Be this as it may, I know that a waggon load of these pins is, in America itself, equal in value to a waggon load of barrels of the finest flour. This is being undeniable, and the fact being undeniable that we can grow locust pins here, that I can take a seed to-day, and say that it shall produce two pins in seven years' time, will it not become an article of heavy accusation against the government if they neglect even one day to set about tearing up their infernal Scotch firs and larches in Wolmer Forest and elsewhere, and putting locust trees in their stead, in order, first to provide this excellent material for ship-building; and next to have some fine plantations in the Holt Forest, Wolmer Forest, the New Forest, the Forest of Dean, and elsewhere, the only possible argument against doing which being, that I may possibly take a ride round amongst their plantations, and that it may be everlastingly recorded that it was I who was the cause of the government's adopting this wise and beneficial measure?

Above all things in the world, it is the duty of every man, who has it in his power, to do what he can to promote the creation of materials for the building of ships in the best manner;

and it is now a fact of perfect notoriety that, with regard to the building of ships, it cannot be done in the best manner without the assistance of this sort of wood.

I have seen a specimen of the locust wood used in the making of furniture. I saw it in the posts of a bedstead; and anything more handsome I never saw in my life. I had used it myself in the making of rules; but I never saw it in this shape before. It admits of a polish nearly as fine as that of box. It is a bright and beautiful yellow. And in bedsteads, for instance, it would last for ever, and would not become loose at the joints, like oak and other perishable wood; because, like the live oak and the red cedar, no worm or insect ever preys upon it. There is no fear of the quantity being too great. It would take a century to make as many plantations as are absolutely wanted in England. It would be a prodigious creation of real and solid wealth. Not such a creation as that of paper money, which only takes the dinner from one man and gives it to another, which only gives an unnatural swell to a city or a watering place by beggaring a thousand villages; but it would be a creation of money's worth things. Let any man go and look at a farm-house that was built a hundred years ago. He will find it, though very well built with stone or brick, actually falling to pieces, unless very frequently repaired, owing entirely to the rotten wood in the window-sills, the door-sills, the plates, the pins, the door-frames, the window frames, and all those parts of the beams, the joists, and the rafters, that come in contact with the rain or the moisture. The two parts of a park paling which give way first, are the parts of the post that meet the ground, and the pins which hold the rails to the post. Both these rot long before the paling rots. Now all this is avoided by the use of locust as sills, as joists, as posts, as frames, and as pins. Many a roof has come down merely from the rotting of the pins. The best of spine oak is generally chosen for these pins. But after a time, the air gets into the pin-hole. The pin rots from the moist air, it gives way, the wind shakes the roof, and down it comes, or it swags, the wet gets in, and the house is rotten. In ships, the pins are the first things that give way. Many a ship would last twenty years after it is broken up, if put together with locust pins. I am aware that some readers will become tired of this subject, and nothing but my conviction of its being

of the very first importance to the whole kingdom could make me thus dwell upon it.

At Thursley we have a little more publicity for the American fireplace, with an added assurance that his enthusiasm is quite disinterested!

We got to Thursley after our beautiful ride through Mr Leech's coppices, and the weather being pretty cold, we found ourselves most happily situated here by the side of an *American fireplace*, making extremely comfortable a room which was formerly amongst the most uncomfortable in the world. This is another of what the malignant parsons call Cobbett's Quakeries. But my real opinion is that the whole body of them, all put together, have never, since they were born, conferred so much benefit upon the country as I have conferred upon it by introducing this fireplace. Mr Judson of Kensington, who is the manufacturer of them, tells me that he has a great demand, which gives me much pleasure; but really, coming to conscience, no man ought to sit by one of these fireplaces that does not go the full length with me both in politics and religion. It is not fair for them to enjoy the warmth without subscribing to the doctrines of the giver of the warmth. However, as I have nothing to do with Mr Judson's affair, either as to the profit or the loss, he must sell the fireplaces to whomsoever he pleases.

KENSINGTON,  
*Sunday, 20 Nov.*

Coming to Godalming on Friday, where business kept us that night, we had to experience at the inn the want of our American fireplace. A large and long room to sit in, with a miserable thing called a screen to keep the wind from our backs, with a smoke in the room half an hour after the fire was lighted, we, consuming a full bushel of coals in order to keep us warm, were not half so well off as we should have been in the same room, and without any screen, and with two gallons of coals, if we had our American fireplace. I gave the landlord my advice upon the subject, and he said he would go and look at the fireplace at Mr Knowles's. That was precisely one of those rooms which stand in absolute need of such a fireplace. It is, I should think, five-and-thirty or forty feet long, and pretty nearly

twenty feet wide. I could sooner dine with a labouring man upon his allowance of bread, such as I have mentioned above, than I would, in winter time, dine in that room upon turbot and surloin of beef. An American fireplace, with a good fire in it, would make every part of that room pleasant to dine in in the coldest day in winter. I saw a public-house drinking-room, where the owner has tortured his invention to get a little warmth for his guests, where he fetches his coals in a waggon from a distance of twenty miles or thereabouts, and where he consumes these coals by the bushel, to effect that which he cannot effect at all, and which he might effect completely with about a fourth part of the coals.

From Godalming to Ripley the two took post-chaise, but at the latter place mounted their horses again to ride home to Kensington. Cobbett, whose *Grammar of the English Language* proves that he had at least the makings of a teacher, gives us an insight into his practical methods. To the layman there would appear to be much sound commonsense in his approach, though the professional may be rightly dubious of the possibility of such quick results as he seemed to obtain.

When we got to Ripley, we found the day very fine, and we got upon our horses and rode home to dinner, after an absence of just one month, agreeably to our original intention, having seen a great deal of the country, having had a great deal of sport, and having, I trust, laid in a stock of health for the winter, sufficient to enable us to withstand the suffocation of this smoking and stinking Wen.

But Richard and I have done something else besides ride, and hunt, and course, and stare about us, during this month. He was eleven years old last March, and it was now time for him to begin to know something about letters and figures. He has learned to work in the garden, and having been a good deal in the country, knows a great deal about farming affairs. He can ride anything of a horse, and over anything that a horse will go over. So expert at hunting, that his first teacher, Mr Budd, gave the hounds up to his management in the field; but now he begins to talk about nothing but *fox-hunting*! That is a dangerous thing. When he and I went from home, I had business at Reigate. It was a very wet morning, and we went off long before daylight in a post-chaise, intending to have our horses brought



after us. He began to talk in anticipation of the sport he was going to have, and was very inquisitive as to the probability of our meeting with fox-hounds, which gave me occasion to address him thus: "Fox-hunting is a very fine thing, and very proper for people to be engaged in, and it is very desirable to be able to ride well and to be in at the death; but that is not ALL; that is not everything. Any fool can ride a horse and draw a cover; any groom or any stable-fellow, who is as ignorant as the horse, can do these things; but all gentlemen that go a fox-hunting [I hope God will forgive me for the lie] are scholars, Richard. It is not the riding, nor the scarlet coats, that make them gentlemen; it is their scholarship." What he thought I do not know; for he sat as mute as a fish, and I could not see his countenance. "So," said I, "you must now begin to learn something, and you must begin with arithmetic." He had learned from mere play to read, being first set to work of his own accord to find out what was said about Thurtell, when all the world was talking and reading about Thurtell. That had induced us to give him *Robinson Crusoe*; and that had made him a passable reader. Then he had scrawled down letters and words upon paper, and had written letters to me in the strangest way imaginable. His knowledge of figures he had acquired from the necessity of knowing the several numbers upon the barrels of seeds brought from America, and the numbers upon the doors of houses. So that I had pretty nearly a blank sheet of paper to begin upon; and I have always held it to be stupidity to the last degree to attempt to put book-learning into children who are too young to reason with.

I began with a pretty long lecture on the utility of arithmetic; the absolute necessity of it, in order for us to make out our accounts of the trees and seeds that we should have to sell in the winter, and the utter impossibility of our getting paid for our pains unless we were able to make out our accounts, which accounts could not be made out unless we understood something about arithmetic. Having thus made him understand the utility of the thing, and given him a very strong instance in the case of our nursery affairs, I proceeded to explain to him the meaning of the word arithmetic, the power of figures, according to the place they occupied. I then, for it was still dark, taught him to add a few figures together, I naming the figures one after another, while he, at the mention of each new figure said the

amount, and if incorrectly, he was corrected by me. When we had got a sum of about 24, I said now there is another line of figures on the left of this, and therefore you are to put down the 4 and carry 2. "What is *carrying*?" said he. I then explained to him the *why* and the *wherefore* of this, and he perfectly understood me at once. We then did several other little sums; and by the time we got to Sutton, it becoming daylight, I took a pencil and set him a little sum upon paper, which, after making a mistake or two, he did very well. By the time we got to Reigate he had done several more, and at last a pretty long one, with very few errors. We had business all day, and thought no more of our scholarship until we went to bed, and then we did, in our post-chaise fashion, a great many lines in arithmetic before we went to sleep. Thus we went on mixing our riding and hunting with our arithmetic, until we quitted Godalming, when he did a sum very nicely in *multiplication of money*, falling a little short of what I had laid out, which was to make him learn the four rules in whole numbers first, and then in money, before I got home.

Friends' houses are not so good as inns for executing a project like this; because you cannot very well be by yourself; and we slept but four nights at inns during our absence. So that we have actually stolen the time to accomplish this job, and Richard's journal records that he was more than fifteen days out of the thirty-one coursing or hunting. Nothing struck me more than the facility, the perfect readiness with which he at once performed addition of money. There is a *pence table* which boys usually learn, and during the learning of which they usually get no small number of thumps. This table I found is wholly unnecessary to set him. I had written it for him in one of the leaves of his journal book. But upon looking at it, he said, "I don't want this, because, you know, I have nothing to do but to *divide by twelve*." That is right, said I, you are a clever fellow, Dick; and I shut up the book.

Now when there is so much talk about education, let me ask how many pounds it generally costs parents to have a boy taught this much of arithmetic; how much time it costs also; and, which is a far more serious consideration, how much mortification, and very often how much loss of health, it costs the poor scolded broken-hearted child, who becomes dunder-headed and dull for all his life-time, merely because that has been imposed

upon him as a task which he ought to regard as an object of pleasant pursuit. I never even once desired him to stay a moment from any other thing that he had a mind to go at. I just wrote the sums down upon paper, laid them upon the table, and left him to tackle them when he pleased. In the case of the multiplication-table, the learning of which is something of a job, and which it is absolutely necessary to learn perfectly, I advised him to go up into his bedroom and read it twenty times over out loud every morning before he went a hunting, and ten times over every night after he came back, till it all came as pat upon his lips as the names of persons that he knew. He did this, and at the end of about a week he was ready to set on upon multiplication. It is the irksomeness of the thing which is the great bar to learning of every sort. I took care not to suffer irksomeness to seize his mind for a moment, and the consequence was that which I have described. I wish clearly to be understood as ascribing nothing to extraordinary *natural* ability. There are, as I have often said, as many *sorts* of men as there are of dogs; but I do not pretend to be of any peculiarly excellent sort, and I have never discovered any indications of it. There are, to be sure, sorts that are naturally stupid; but the generality of men are not so; and I believe that every boy of the same age, equally healthy, and brought up in the same manner, would (unless of one of the stupid kinds) learn in just the same sort of way; but not if begun to be thumped at five or six years old, when the poor little things have no idea of the utility of anything; who are hardly sensible beings, and have but just understanding enough to know that it will hurt them if they jump down a chalk pit. I am sure, from thousands of instances that have come under my own eyes, that to begin to teach children book-learning before they are capable of reasoning is the sure and certain way to enfeeble their minds for life; and if they have natural genius, to cramp, if not totally to destroy, that genius.

I think I shall be tempted to mould into a little book these lessons of arithmetic given to Richard. I think that a boy of sense, and of age equal to that of my scholar, would derive great profit from such a little book. It would not be equal to my verbal explanations, especially accompanied with the other parts of my conduct towards my scholar; but, at any rate, it

would be plain; it would be what a boy could understand; it would encourage him by giving him a glimpse at the reasons for what he was doing; it would contain principles; and the difference between principles and rules is this, that the former are persuasions and the latter are commands. There is a great deal of difference between carrying 2 for such and such a reason, and carrying 2 because you *must* carry 2. You see boys that can cover reams of paper with figures, and do it with perfect correctness too; and at the same time can give you not a single reason for any part of what they have done. Now this is really doing very little. The rule is soon forgotten, and then all is forgotten. It would be the same with a lawyer that understood none of the principles of law. As far as he could find and remember cases exactly similar in all their parts to the case which he might have to manage, he would be as profound a lawyer as any in the world; but if there was the slightest difference between his case and the cases he had found upon record, there would be an end of his law.

Some people will say, here is a monstrous deal of vanity and egotism, and if they will tell me how such a story is to be told without exposing a man to this imputation, I will adopt their mode another time. I get nothing by telling the story. I should get full as much by keeping it to myself; but it may be useful to others, and therefore I tell it. Nothing is so dangerous as supposing that you have eight wonders of the world. I have no pretensions to any such possession. I look upon my boy as being like other boys in general. Their fathers can teach arithmetic as well as I; and if they have not a mind to pursue my method, they must pursue their own. Let them apply to the outside of the head and to the back, if they like; let them bargain for thumps and the birch rod; it is their affair and not mine. I never yet saw in my house a child that was *afraid*; that was in any fear whatever; that was ever for a moment under any sort of apprehension, on account of the learning of anything; and I never in my life gave a command, an order, a request, or even advice, to look into any book; and I am quite satisfied that the way to make children dunces, to make them detest books, and justify that detestation, is to tease them and bother them upon the subject.

As to the *age* at which children ought to begin to be taught, it is very curious that, while I was at a friend's house during my

ride, I looked into, by mere accident, a little child's abridgment of the History of England: a little thing about twice as big as a crown-piece. Even into this abridgment the historian had introduced the circumstance of Alfred's father, who, "through a *mistaken notion* of kindness to his son, had suffered him to live to the age of twelve years without any attempt being made to give him education." How came this writer to know that it was a *mistaken notion*? Ought he not rather, when he looked at the result, when he considered the astonishing knowledge and great deeds of Alfred—ought he not to have hesitated before he thus criticized the notions of the father? It appears from the result that the notions of the father were perfectly correct; and I am satisfied that if they had begun to thump the head of Alfred when he was a child, we should not at this day have heard talk of Alfred the Great.

There is now a lapse of some nine months before the next record, which deals with a ride from Burghclere to Petersfield.

UPHUSBAND (HAMPSHIRE),

Thursday, 24 Aug. 1826

We left Burghclere last evening in the rain; but as our distance was only about seven miles, the consequence was little. The crops of corn, except oats, have been very fine hereabouts; and there are never any pease, nor any beans, grown here. The sainfoin fields, though on these high lands, and though the dry weather has been of such long continuance, look as green as watered meadows, and a great deal more brilliant and beautiful. I have often described this beautiful village (which lies in a deep dell) and its very variously shaped environs, in my *Register* of November 1822. This is one of those countries of chalk and flint and dry-top soil and hard roads and high and bare hills and deep dells, with clumps of lofty trees here and there, which are so many rookeries: this is one of those countries, or rather, approaching towards those countries, of downs and flocks of sheep, which I like so much, which I always get to when I can, and which many people seem to flee from as naturally as men flee from pestilence. They call such countries *naked* and *barren*, though they are, in the summer months, actually covered with meat and with corn.



## EAST EVERLEY (WILTSHIRE),

*Sunday Evening, 27 August*

We set off from Uphusband on Friday, about ten o'clock, the morning having been wet. My sons came round, in the chaise, by Andover and Weyhill, while I came right across the country towards Ludgarshall, which lies in the road from Andover to this place. I never knew the *flies* so troublesome in England as I found them in this ride. I was obliged to carry a great bough, and to keep it in constant motion, in order to make the horse peaceable enough to enable me to keep on his back. It is a country of fields, lanes, and high hedges; so that no *wind* could come to relieve my horse; and, in spite of all I could do, a great part of him was covered with foam from the sweat. In the midst of this, I got, at one time, a little out of my road in or near a place called Tangle. I rode up to the garden-wicket of a cottage, and asked the woman, who had two children, and who seemed to be about thirty years old, which was the way to Ludgarshall, which I knew could not be more than about *four miles* off. She did *not know*! A very neat, smart, and pretty woman; but she did not know the way to this rotten borough, which was, I was sure, only about four miles off! "Well, my dear good woman," said I, "but you *have been* at Ludgarshall?"—"No."—"Nor at Andover?" (six miles another way)—"No."—"Nor at Marlborough?" (nine miles another way)—"No."—"Pray, were you born in this house?"—"Yes."—"And how far have you ever been from this house?"—"Oh! I have been *up in the parish* and over to *Chute*." That is to say, the utmost extent of her voyages had been about two and a half miles! Let no one laugh at her, and, above all others, let not me, who am convinced that the *facilities* which now exist of *moving human bodies from place to place* are amongst the *curse*s of the country, the destroyers of industry, of morals, and, of course, of happiness. It is a great error to suppose that people are rendered stupid by remaining always in the same place. This was a very acute woman, and as well behaved as need to be. There was in July last (last month) a Preston man who had never been further from home than Chorley (about eight or ten miles), and who started off, *on foot*, and went, *alone*, to Rouen, in France, and back again to London, in the space of

about ten days; and that, too, without being able to speak, or to understand, a word of French. N.B.—Those gentlemen who, at Green Street, in Kent, were so kind to this man, *upon finding that he had voted for me*, will be pleased to accept of my best thanks. Wilding (that is the man's name) was full of expressions of gratitude towards these gentlemen. He spoke of others who were good to him on his way; and even at Calais he found friends on my account; but he was particularly loud in his praises of the gentlemen in Kent, who had been so good and so kind to him, that he seemed quite in an ecstasy when he talked of their conduct.

Though Ludgershall was a "mean and beggarly" place, yet it produced "some rashers of bacon and a very civil landlady."

Everley is but about three miles from Ludgarshall, so that we got here in the afternoon of Friday: and in the evening a very heavy storm came and drove away all flies, and made the air delightful. This is a real *down-country*. Here you see miles and miles square without a tree, or hedge, or bush. It is country of greensward. This is the most famous place in all England for *coursing*. I was here, at this very inn, with a party eighteen years ago; and the landlord, who is still the same, recognized me as soon as he saw me. There were forty brace of greyhounds taken out into the field on one of the days, and every brace had one course, and some of them two. The ground is the finest in the world; from two to three miles for the hare to run to cover, and not a stone nor a bush nor a hillock. It was here proved to me that the hare is, by far, the swiftest of all English animals; for I saw three hares, in one day, *run away* from the dogs. To give dog and hare a fair trial there should be but *one* dog. Then, if that dog got so close as to compel the hare *to turn*, that would be a proof that the dog ran fastest. When the dog, or dogs, never get near enough to the hare to induce her to *turn*, she is said, and very justly, to "*run away*" from them; and as I saw three hares do this in one day, I conclude that the hare is the swiftest animal of the two.

This inn is one of the nicest, and, in summer, one of the pleasantest, in England; for I think that my experience in this way will justify me in speaking thus positively. The house is large, the yard and the stables good, the landlord *a farmer* also,

and, therefore, no cribbing your horses in hay or straw and yourself in eggs and cream. The garden, which adjoins the south side of the house, is large, of good shape, has a terrace on one side, lies on the slope, consists of well-disposed clumps of shrubs and flowers, and of short grass very neatly kept. In the lower part of the garden there are high trees, and, amongst these, the tulip-tree and the live-oak. Beyond the garden is a large clump of lofty sycamores, and in these a most populous rookery, in which, of all things in the world, I delight. The village, which contains 301 souls, lies to the north of the inn, but adjoining its premises. All the rest, in every direction, is bare down or open arable. I am now sitting at one of the southern windows of this inn, looking across the garden towards the rookery. It is nearly sun-setting; the rooks are skimming and curving over the tops of the trees; while under the branches I see a flock of several hundred sheep coming nibbling their way in from the down and going to their fold.

My sons set off about three o'clock to-day on their way to Herefordshire, where I intend to join them when I have had a pretty good ride in this country. There is no pleasure in travelling except on horse-back or on foot. Carriages take your body from place to place, and if you merely want to be *conveyed* they are very good; but they enable you to see and to know nothing at all of the country.

EAST EVERLEY,

*Monday Morning, 5 o'clock, 28 Aug. 1826*

A very fine morning; a man, *eighty-two years of age*, just beginning to mow the short-grass in the garden: I thought it, even when I was young, the *hardest work* that man had to do. To *look on*, this work seems nothing; but it tries every sinew in your frame if you go upright and do your work well. This old man never knew how to do it well, and he stoops, and he hangs his scythe wrong; but with all this, it must be a surprising man to mow short-grass as well as he does at *eighty*. *I wish I* may be able to mow short-grass at eighty! That's all I have to say of the matter.

## XX

### *A Ride down the Valley of the Avon in Wiltshire*

IN undertaking this tour Cobbett has a particular object in view. He intends to follow the course of the Avon from its source near Marlborough to Salisbury. That length of the river valley contains more than thirty churches and he wishes to see for himself what evidences this particular stretch of country shows of resources to support a one-time population of the size suggested by this number of churches. Thus he hopes to expose "the folly, the stupidity, the inanity, the presumption, the insufferable emptiness and insolence and barbarity" of those of his contemporaries who maintain that the population of England is increasing at a greater rate than food can be produced to support it, and urge compulsory emigration as the solution.

MILTON,

*Monday, 28 August*

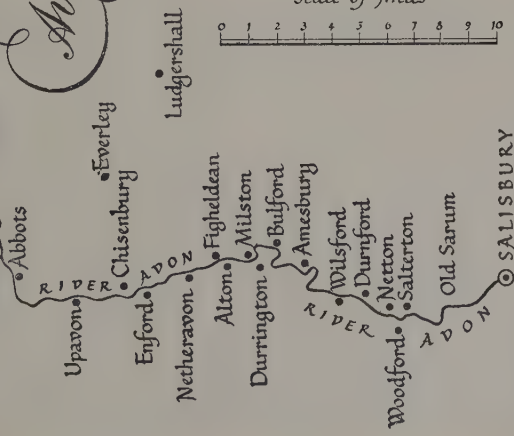
I came off this morning on the Marlborough road about two miles, or three, and then turned off, over the downs, in a north-westerly direction, in search of the source of the Avon river, which goes down to Salisbury. I had once been at Netheravon, a village in this valley; but I had often heard this valley described as one of the finest pieces of land in all England; I knew that there were about thirty parish churches, standing in a length of about thirty miles, and in an average width of hardly a mile; and I was resolved to see a little into the *reasons* that could have induced our fathers to build all these churches, especially if, as the Scotch would have us believe, there were but a mere handful of people in England *until of late years*.

He rides alongside Sir John Astley's park—"a thumping estate"—turns across the down, and inquires the way of a shepherd.

The shepherd showed me the way towards Milton; and at the end of about a mile, from the top of a very high part of the down, with a steep slope towards the valley, I first saw this *Valley of Avon*; and a most beautiful sight it was! Villages, hamlets, large

# The Avon Valley

Wilcot • Milton Lilbourne  
Pewsey • Easton



from PRESENT-DAY MAP



COBBETT'S MAP



farms, towers, steeples, fields, meadows, orchards, and very fine timber trees, scattered all over the valley. The shape of the thing is this: on each side *downs*, very lofty and steep in some places, and sloping miles back in other places; but each *out-side* of the valley are downs. From the edge of the downs begin capital *arable fields* generally of very great dimensions, and, in some places, running a mile or two back into little *cross-valleys*, formed by hills of downs. After the corn-fields come *meadows* on each side, down to the *brook* or *river*. The farm-houses, mansions, villages, and hamlets are generally situated in that part of the arable land which comes nearest the meadows.

Great as my expectations had been, they were more than fulfilled. I delight in this sort of country; and I had frequently seen the vale of the Itchen, that of the Bourn, and also that of the Teste in Hampshire; I had seen the vales amongst the South Downs; but I never before saw anything to please me like this valley of the Avon. I sat upon my horse and looked over Milton and Easton and Pewsey for half an hour, though I had not breakfasted. The hill was very steep. A road, going slanting down it, was still so steep, and washed so very deep by the rains of ages, that I did not attempt to *ride* down it, and I did not like to lead my horse, the path was so narrow. So seeing a boy with a drove of pigs going out to the stubbles, I beckoned him to come up to me; and he came and led my horse down for me. But now, before I begin to ride down this beautiful vale, let me give, as well as my means will enable me, a plan or map of it, which I have made in this way: a friend has lent me a very old map of Wiltshire describing the spots where all the churches stand, and also all the spots where manor-houses or mansion-houses stood. I laid a piece of very thin paper upon the map, and thus traced the river upon my paper, putting *figures* to represent the spots where churches stand, and putting *stars* to represent the spots where manor-houses or mansion-houses formerly stood. Endless is the variety in the shape of the high lands which form this valley. Sometimes the slope is very gentle, and the arable lands go back very far. At others, the downs come out into the valley almost like piers into the sea, being very steep in their sides, as well as their ends towards the valley. They have no slope at their other ends: indeed they have no *back ends*, but run into the main high land. There is

also great variety in the width of the valley; great variety in the width of the meadows; but the land appears all to be of the very best; and it must be so, for the farmers confess it.

From the top of the hill I was not a little surprised to see, in every part of the valley that my eye could reach, a due, a large, portion of fields of swedish turnips, all looking extremely well. I had found the turnips of both sorts by no means bad from Salt Hill to Newbury; but from Newbury through Burghclere, Highclere, Uphusband, and Tangle, I had seen but few. At and about Ludgarshall and Everley I had seen hardly any. But when I came this morning to Milton Hill Farm, I saw a very large field of what appeared to me to be fine swedish turnips. In the valley, however, I found them much finer, and the fields were very beautiful objects, forming, as their colour did, so great a contrast with that of the fallows and the stubbles, which latter are, this year, singularly clean and bright.

Having gotten to the bottom of the hill, I proceeded on to the village of Milton, the church of which is, in the map, represented by the figure 3. I left Easton (2) away at my right, and I did not go up to Watton Rivers (1) where the river Avon rises, and which lies just close to the south-west corner of Marlborough Forest, and at about 5 or 6 miles from the town of Marlborough. Lower down the river, as I thought, there lived a friend, who was a great farmer, and whom I intended to call on. It being my way, however, always to begin making inquiries soon enough, I asked the pig-driver where this friend lived; and, to my surprise, I found that he lived in the parish of Milton. After riding up to the church, as being the centre of the village, I went on towards the house of my friend, which lay on my road down the valley. I have many, many times witnessed agreeable surprise; but I do not know that I ever in the whole course of my life saw people so much surprised and pleased as this farmer and his family were at seeing me. People often *tell* you that they are *glad to see* you; and in general they speak truth. I take pretty good care not to approach any house, with the smallest appearance of a design to eat or drink in it, unless I be *quite sure* of a cordial reception; but my friend at Fifield (it is in Milton parish) and all his family really seemed to be delighted beyond all expression.

When I set out this morning, I intended to go all the way down to the city of Salisbury (31) *to-day*; but I soon found that

to refuse to sleep at Fifield would cost me a great deal more trouble than a day was worth. So that I made my mind up to stay in this farm-house, which has one of the nicest gardens, and it contains some of the finest flowers, that I ever saw, and all is disposed with as much good taste as I have ever witnessed. Here I am, then, just going to bed after having spent as pleasant a day as I ever spent in my life.

AMESBURY,

*Tuesday, 29 August*

I set off from Fifield this morning, and got here (25 on the map) about one o'clock, with my clothes wet. While they are drying, and while a mutton chop is getting ready, I sit down to make some notes of what I have seen since I left Enford . . . but here comes my dinner: and I must put off my notes till I have dined.

SALISBURY,

*Wednesday, 30 August*

My ride yesterday, from Milton to this city of Salisbury, was, without any exception, the most pleasant; it brought before me the greatest number of, to me, interesting objects, and it gave rise to more interesting reflections than I remember ever to have had brought before my eyes, or into my mind, in any one day of my life; and therefore, this ride was, without any exception, the most pleasant that I ever had in my life, as far as my recollection serves me. I got a little wet in the middle of the day; but I got dry again, and I arrived here in very good time, though I went over the Accursed Hill (Old Sarum), and went across to Laverstoke, before I came to Salisbury.

Let us now, then, look back over this part of Wiltshire, and see whether the inhabitants ought to be "transported" by order of the "Emigration Committee," of which we shall see and say more by and by. I have before described this valley generally; let me now speak of it a little more in detail. The farms are all large, and, generally speaking, they were always large, I dare say; because *sheep* is one of the great things here; and sheep, in a country like this, must be kept in *flocks*, to be of any profit. The sheep principally manure the land. This is to be done only by *folding*; and to fold, you must have a *flock*.

Every farm has its portion of down, arable, and meadow; and, in many places, the latter are watered meadows, which is a great resource where sheep are kept in flocks; because these meadows furnish grass for the suckling ewes early in the spring; and indeed, because they have always food in them for sheep and cattle of all sorts. These meadows have had no part of the suffering from the drought this year. They fed the ewes and lambs in the spring, and they are now yielding a heavy crop of hay; for I saw men mowing in them, in several places, particularly about Netheravon (18 in the map), though it was raining at the time.

The turnips look pretty well all the way down the valley; but I see very few, except swedish turnips. The early common turnips very nearly all failed, I believe. But the stubbles are beautifully bright; and the rick-yards tell us that the crops are good, especially of wheat. This is not a country of pease and beans, nor of oats, except for home consumption. The crops are wheat, barley, wool and lambs, and these latter not to be sold to butchers, but to be sold, at the great fairs, to those who are going to keep them for some time, whether to breed from or finally to fat for the butcher. It is the pulse and the oats that appear to have failed most this year; and, therefore, this valley has not suffered. I do not perceive that they have many *potatoes*; but what they have of this base root seem to look well enough. It was one of the greatest villains upon earth (Sir Walter Raleigh) who (they say) first brought this root into England. He was hanged at last! What a pity, since he was to be hanged, the hanging did not take place before he became such a mischievous devil as he was in the latter two-thirds of his life!

The stack-yards down this valley are beautiful to behold. They contain from five to fifteen banging wheat-ricks, besides barley-ricks and hay-ricks, and also besides the contents of the barns, many of which exceed a hundred, some two hundred, and I saw one at Pewsey (4 in map), and another at Fittleton (16 in map), each of which exceeded two hundred and fifty feet in length. At a farm which, in the old maps, is called Chissenbury Priory (14 in map), I think I counted twenty-seven ricks of one sort and another, and sixteen or eighteen of them wheat-ricks. I could not conveniently get to the yard without longer delay than I wished to make; but I could not be much out in my

counting. A very fine sight this was, and it could not meet the eye without making one look round (and in vain) *to see the people who were to eat all this food*; and without making one reflect on the horrible, the unnatural, the base and infamous state in which we must be, when projects are on foot, and are openly avowed, for *transporting* those who raise this food, because they want to eat enough of it to keep them alive; and when no project is on foot for transporting the idlers who live in luxury upon this same food; when no project is on foot for transporting pensioners, parsons, or dead-weight people!

A little while before I came to this farm-yard I saw, in one piece, about four hundred acres of wheat-stubble, and I saw a sheep-fold which, I thought, contained an acre of ground, and had in it about four thousand sheep and lambs. The fold was divided into three separate flocks; but the piece of ground was one and the same; and I thought it contained about an acre. At one farm, between Pewsey and Upavon, I counted more than 300 hogs in one stubble. This is certainly the most delightful farming in the world. No ditches, no water-furrows, no drains, hardly any hedges, no dirt and mire, even in the wettest seasons of the year: and though the downs are naked and cold, the valleys are snugness itself. They are, as to the downs, what *ah-ahs!* are in parks or lawns. When you are going over the downs, you look *over* the valleys, as in the case of the *ah-ah*; and if you be not acquainted with the country, your surprise, when you come to the edge of the hill, is very great. The shelter in these valleys, and particularly where the downs are steep and lofty on the sides, is very complete. Then the trees are everywhere lofty. They are generally elms, with some ashes, which delight in the soil that they find here. There are, almost always, two or three large clumps of trees in every parish, and a rookery or two (not *rag-rookery*) to every parish. By the water's edge there are willows; and to almost every farm there is a fine orchard, the trees being, in general, very fine, and this year they are, in general, well loaded with fruit. So that, all taken together, it seems impossible to find a more beautiful and pleasant country than this, or to imagine any life more easy and happy than men might here lead if they were untormented by an accursed system that takes the food from those that raise it, and gives it to those that do nothing that is useful to man.



Here the farmer has always an abundance of straw. His farm-yard is never without it. Cattle and horses are bedded up to their eyes. The yards are put close under the shelter of a hill, or are protected by lofty and thick-set trees. Every animal seems comfortably situated; and in the dreariest days of winter these are, perhaps, the happiest scenes in the world; or, rather, they would be such, if those, whose labour makes it all, trees, corn, sheep and everything, had but *their fair share* of the produce of that labour. What share they really have of it one cannot exactly say; but I should suppose that every labouring *man* in this valley raises as much food as would suffice for fifty or a hundred persons, fed like himself!

Cobbett calculates how many people one parish in this valley should be able to support by its produce. He finds that it could give bread to 800 families, mutton to 500, and bacon and beer to 207—an average of 502 families. He compares the fare they would have with the living standards of labourers who have to keep their families on a wage of 9s. a week. In this parish, therefore, there are one hundred families, half-starved, raising sufficient food to keep five hundred families on a liberal scale. "If such an operation," says he "do not need putting an end to, then the devil himself is a saint." Yet there are "cowardly reptiles" who, while saying nothing of the load of taxes, rail against the poor rates and advocate emigration. Cobbett argues that the churches show that at one time the population of the Avon valley was many times greater than in his own day. Furthermore, but eight out of an original fifty mansion houses remain. All is an example of the "great and glorious effects of paper-money." The over-production of this valley now goes to enrich the "fund holders" so that the labourers see "the fruit of their labour taken away and receive nothing in exchange."

If the over-produce of this Valley of Avon were given, by the farmers, to the weavers in Lancashire, to the iron and steel chaps of Warwickshire, and to other makers or sellers of useful things, there would come an abundance of all these useful things into this valley from Lancashire and other parts; but if, as is the case, the over-produce goes to the fund-holders, the dead-weight, the soldiers, the lord and lady and master and miss pensioners and sinecure people; if the over-produce go to them, as a very great part of it does, nothing, not even the parings of one's nails, can come back to the valley in exchange.

And can this operation, then, add to the "national wealth"? It adds to the "wealth" of those who carry on the affairs of state; it fills their pockets, those of their relatives and dependents; it fattens all tax-eaters; but it can give no wealth to the "nation," which means the whole of the people. National wealth means the commonwealth or commonweal; and these mean, the general good, or happiness, of the people, and the safety and honour of the state; and these are not to be secured by robbing those who labour in order to support a large part of the community in idleness. Devizes is the market-town to which the corn goes from the greater part of this valley. If, when a waggon-load of wheat goes off in the morning, the waggon came back at night loaded with cloth, salt, or something or other, equal in value to the wheat, except what might be necessary to leave with the shopkeeper as his profit; then, indeed, the people might see the waggon go off without tears in their eyes. But, now, they see it go to carry away, and to bring next to nothing in return.

Cobbett then puts in a word in support of holidays for these country workers. He argues against the "mechanic inventions" which have taken the rural industries from the houses of the people and built up the large manufactories of the towns, thus depriving the women and girls of their work of cloth-making in the home. His survey of the valley has satisfied Cobbett that his arguments against the advocates of emigration are based on sound fact.

During the day I crossed the river about fifteen or sixteen times, and in such hot weather it was very pleasant to be so much amongst meadows and water. I had been at Netheravon (18) about eighteen years ago, where I had seen a great quantity of hares. It is a place belonging to Mr Hicks Beach, or Beech, who was once a member of parliament. I found the place altered a good deal; out of repair; the gates rather rotten; and (a very bad sign!) the roof of the dog-kennel falling in! There is a church at this village of Netheravon large enough to hold a thousand or two of people, and the whole parish contains only 350 souls, men, women, and children. This Netheravon was formerly a great lordship, and in the parish there were three considerable mansion-houses, besides the one near the church. These mansions are all down now; and it is curious enough to see the former *walled gardens* become *orchards*, together with

other changes, all tending to prove the gradual decay in all except what appertains merely to *the land* as a thing of production for the distant market.

When I came down to Stratford Dean (29 in map) I wanted to go across to Laverstoke, which lay to my left of Salisbury; but just on the side of the road here, at Stratford Dean, rises the *Accursed Hill*. It is very lofty. It was originally a hill in an irregular sort of sugar-loaf shape: but it was so altered by the Romans, or by somebody, that the upper three-quarter parts of the hill now, when seen from a distance, somewhat resemble *three cheeses*, laid one upon another; the bottom one a great deal broader than the next, and the top one like a Stilton cheese, in proportion to a Gloucester one. I resolved to ride over this Accursed Hill.

The hill is very steep, and I dismounted and led my horse up. Being as near to the top as I could conveniently get, I stood a little while reflecting, not so much on the changes which that hill had seen, as on the changes, the terrible changes, which, in all human probability, it had *yet to see*, and which it would have greatly *helped to produce*. It was impossible to stand on this accursed spot without swelling with indignation against the base and plundering and murderous sons of corruption. I have often wished, and I, speaking out loud, expressed the wish now; "May that man perish for ever and ever, who, having the power, neglects to bring to justice the perjured, the suborning, the insolent and perfidious miscreants, who openly sell their country's rights and their own souls."

I got into Salisbury about half-past seven o'clock, less tired than I recollect ever to have been after so long a ride; for, including my several crossings of the river and my deviations to look at churches and farm-yards and rick-yards, I think I must have ridden nearly forty miles.

## XXI

### *A Ride from Salisbury to Warminster, from Warminster to Frome, from Frome to Devizes, and from Devizes to Highworth*

COBBETT writes the first part of the Journal of this ride from the ancient and attractive village of Heytesbury, and records his impressions of the beautiful Wylye valley. His route is through Warminster, Frome, and Westbury. He has much to say in praise of Warminster, where he likes the town itself, the landlord of the inn and his wife, and the corn- and meat-markets. Frome shows strong evidence of the slump in broad-cloth weaving, and he has no good to say of the place. Westbury also is condemned as a "nasty odious rotten borough, a really rotten place" though it is "a place of great grandeur." The question of rural population is still one of the uppermost in Cobbett's mind and comes in for much discussion alongside such related topics as dilapidated mansion houses and parsonages, and absentee clergy. A congregation of five at seven o'clock in the morning in the magnificent pile of Salisbury Cathedral causes Cobbett to feel that he lives in degenerate times. He discusses how certain families, of no particular merit, always seem to obtain positions where they are maintained at the public expense. He satirizes the yeomanry cavalry, recalling how, as at "Peterloo," they were often put to reactionary uses. He attacks the newspapers and the merchant Quakers. Such matters leave him very little space for purely descriptive writing, but there are brief passages and his appraising eye lights on at least one pretty girl!

At Salisbury, or very near to it, four other rivers fall into the Avon. The Wyly river, the Nadder, the Born, and another little river that comes from Norrington. These all become one, at last, just below Salisbury, and then, under the name of the Avon, wind along down and fall into the sea at Christchurch. In coming from Salisbury, I came up the road which runs pretty nearly parallel with the river Wyly, which river rises at Warminster and in the neighbourhood. This river runs down a valley twenty-two miles long. It is not so pretty as the valley of the Avon; but it is very fine in its whole length from Salisbury

## Rural Rides\* 21 to 26

Outward Journey —

Return Journey ----





to this place (Heytesbury). Here are watered meadows nearest to the river on both sides; then the gardens, the houses, and the corn-fields. After the corn-fields come the downs; but, generally speaking, the downs are not so bold here as they are on the sides of the Avon. The downs do not come out in promontories so often as they do on the sides of the Avon. The *Ah-ah!* if I may so express it, is not so deep, and the sides of it not so steep, as in the case of the Avon; but the villages are as frequent; there is more than one church in every mile, and there has been a due proportion of mansion-houses demolished and defaced. The farms are very fine up this vale, and the meadows, particularly at a place called Stapleford, are singularly fine. They had just been mowed at Stapleford, and the hay carried off. At Stapleford there is a little cross valley, running up between two hills of the down. There is a little run of water about a yard wide at this time, coming down this little vale across the road into the river. The little vale runs up three miles. It does not appear to be half a mile wide; but in those three miles there are four churches; namely, Stapleford, Uppington, Berwick St James, and Winterborne Stoke.

To-day has been exceedingly hot. Hotter, I think, for a short time, than I ever felt it in England before. In coming through a village called Wishford, and mounting a little hill, I thought the heat upon my back was as great as I had ever felt it in my life. There were thunderstorms about, and it had rained at Wishford a little before I came to it.

My next village was one that I had lived in for a short time, when I was only about ten or eleven years of age. I had been sent down with a horse from Farnham, and I remember that I went by *Stonehenge*, and rode up and looked at the stones. From Stonehenge I went to the village of Steeple Langford, where I remained from the month of June till the fall of the year. I remembered the beautiful villages up and down this valley. I also remembered, very well, that the women at Steeple Langford used to card and spin dyed wool. I was, therefore, somewhat filled with curiosity to see this Steeple Langford again; and indeed, it was the recollection of this village that made me take a ride into Wiltshire this summer. I have, I dare say, a thousand times talked about this Steeple Langford and about the beautiful farms and meadows along this valley.

When I got to Steeple Langford, I found no public-house, and I found it a much more miserable place than I had remembered it. The *Steeple*, to which it owed its distinctive appellation, was gone; and the place altogether seemed to me to be very much altered for the worse. A little further on, however, I came to a very famous inn, called Deptford Inn, which is in the parish of Wyly. I stayed at this inn till about four o'clock in the afternoon. I remembered Wyly very well, and thought it a gay place when I was a boy. I remembered a very beautiful garden belonging to a rich farmer and miller. I went to see it; but, alas! though the statues in the water and on the grass-plot were still remaining, everything seemed to be in a state of perfect carelessness and neglect.

From Heytesbury to Warminster is a part of the country singularly bright and beautiful. From Salisbury up to very near Heytesbury you have the valley as before described by me. Meadows next the water; then arable land; then the downs; but when you come to Heytesbury, and indeed, a little before, in looking forward you see the vale stretch out, from about three miles wide to ten miles wide, from high land to high land. From a hill before you come down to Heytesbury you see through this wide opening into Somersetshire. You see a round hill rising in the middle of the opening; but all the rest a flat enclosed country, and apparently full of wood. . . .

The falling down and the beggary of these parsonage-houses prove beyond all question the decayed state of the population. And, indeed, the mansion-houses are gone, except in a very few instances. There are but five left that I could perceive, all the way from Salisbury to Warminster, though the country is the most pleasant that can be imagined. Here is water, here are meadows; plenty of fresh-water fish; hares and partridges in abundance, and it is next to impossible to destroy them. Here are shooting, coursing, hunting; hills of every height, size, and form; valleys the same; lofty trees and rookeries in every mile; roads always solid and good; always pleasant for exercise; and the air must be of the best in the world.

It is impossible for the eyes of man to be fixed on a finer country than that between the village of Codford and the town of Warminster; and it is not very easy for the eyes of man to discover labouring people more miserable. There are two

villages, one called Norton Bovant and the other Bishopstrow, which I think form together one of the prettiest spots that my eyes ever beheld. The former village belongs to Bennet, the member for the county, who has a mansion there, in which two of his sisters live, I am told. There is a farm at Bishopstrow, standing at the back of the arable land, up in a vale formed by two very lofty hills, upon each of which there was formerly a Roman camp, in consideration of which farm, if the owner would give it me, I would almost consent to let Ottiwell Wood remain quiet in his seat, and suffer the pretty gentlemen of Whitehall to go on without note or comment till they had fairly blowed up their concern. The farm-yard is surrounded by lofty and beautiful trees. In the rick-yard I counted twenty-two ricks of one sort and another. The hills shelter the house and the yard and the trees most completely from every wind but the south. The arable land goes down before the house, and spreads along the edge of the down, going with a gentle slope down to the meadows. So that, going along the turnpike-road, which runs between the lower fields of the arable land, you see the large and beautiful flocks of sheep upon the sides of the down, while the horn-cattle are up to their eyes in grass in the meadows. Just when I was coming along here, the sun was about half an hour high; it shined through the trees most brilliantly; and, to crown the whole, I met, just as I was entering the village, a very pretty girl, who was apparently going a gleaning in the fields. I asked her the name of the place, and when she told me it was Bishopstrow, she pointed to the situation of the church, which, she said, was on the other side of the river.

DEVIZES (WILTS),

*Sunday Morning, 3 Sept.*

I left Warminster yesterday at about one o'clock. It is contrary to my practice to set out at all unless I can do it early in the morning; but at Warminster I was at the south-west corner of this county, and I had made a sort of promise to be to-day at Highworth, which is at the north-east corner, and which parish, indeed, joins up to Berkshire. The distance, including my little intended deviations, was more than fifty miles; and not liking to attempt it in one day, I set off in the middle of the

day, and got here in the evening, just before a pretty heavy rain came on.

Before I speak of my ride from Warminster to this place, I must once more observe that Warminster is a very nice town; everything belonging to it is *solid* and *good*. There are no villainous gingerbread houses running up, and no nasty, shabby-genteel people; no women trapesing about with showy gowns and dirty necks; no jew-looking fellows with dandy coats, dirty shirts and half-heels to their shoes. A really nice and good town. It is a great corn-market: one of the greatest in this part of England; and here things are still conducted in the good old honest fashion. The corn is brought and pitched in the market before it is sold; and, when sold, it is paid for on the nail; and all is over, and the farmers and millers gone home by daylight. Almost everywhere else the corn is sold by sample; it is sold by juggling in a corner; the parties meet and drink first; it is night work; there is no fair and open market; the mass of the people do not know what the prices are; and all this favours that *monopoly* which makes the corn change hands many times, perhaps, before it reaches the mouth, leaving a profit in each pair of hands.

Besides the corn market at Warminster, I was delighted and greatly surprised to see the *meat*. Not only the very finest veal and lamb that I had ever seen in my life, but so exceedingly beautiful that I could hardly believe my eyes. I am a great connoisseur in joints of meat; a great judge, if five-and-thirty years of experience can give sound judgment. I verily believe that I have bought and have roasted more whole sirloins of beef than any man in England; I know all about the matter; a very great visitor of Newgate market; in short, though a little eater, I am a very great provider. It is a fancy, I like the subject, and therefore I understand it; and with all this knowledge of the matter I say I never saw veal and lamb half so fine as what I saw at Warminster. The town is famed for fine meat; and I knew it, and, therefore, I went out in the morning to look at the meat. It was, too, 2*d.* a pound cheaper than I left it at Kensington.

HIGHWORTH (WILTS),

*Monday, 4 Sept.*

I got here yesterday after a ride, including my deviations, of about thirty-four miles, and that, too, *without breaking my fast*. Before I got into the rotten borough of Calne I had two *tributes* to pay to the aristocracy; namely, two *Sunday tolls*; and I was resolved that the country in which these tolls were extorted should have not a farthing of my money that I could, by any means, keep from it. Therefore I fasted until I got into the free-quarters in which I now am. I would have made my horse fast too if I could have done it without the risk of making him unable to carry me.



## XXII

### *A Ride from Highworth to Cricklade and thence to Malmesbury*

HIGHWORTH (WILTS),

*Monday, 4 Sept. 1826*

WHEN I got to Devizes, on Saturday evening, and came to look out of the inn-window into the street, I perceived that I had seen that place before, and always having thought that I should like to *see* Devizes, of which I had heard so much talk as a famous corn-market, I was very much surprised to find that it was not new to me. Presently a stage-coach came up to the door with "Bath and London" upon its panels; and then I recollected that I had been at this place on my way to Bristol last year.

Cobbett views the canal merely as a means of taking away the produce of the countryside to be devoured by the inhabitants of the "Wens of Bath and London." He deplores the depopulated villages through which he has passed, the decayed mansions, and the dilapidated parsonages.

I saw, on my way through the down-countries, hundreds of acres of ploughed land in *shelves*. What I mean is, the side of a steep hill, made into the shape of *a stairs*, only the rising parts more sloping than those of a stairs, and deeper in proportion. The side of the hill, in its original form, was too steep to be ploughed, or even to be worked with a spade. The earth as soon as moved would have rolled down the hill; and, besides, the rains would have soon washed down all the surface earth, and have left nothing for plants of any sort to grow in. Therefore the sides of hills, where the land was sufficiently good, and where it was wanted for the growing of corn, were thus made into a sort of steps or shelves, and the horizontal parts (representing the parts of the stairs that we put our feet upon) were ploughed and sowed, as they generally are, indeed, to this day. Now, no man, not even the hireling Chalmers, will have the impudence to say that these shelves, amounting to thousands

and thousands of acres in Wiltshire alone, were not made by the hand of man. It would be as impudent to contend that the churches were formed by the flood, as to contend that these shelves were formed by that cause. Yet thus the Scotch scribes must contend; or they must give up all their assertions about the ancient beggary and want of population in England; for, as in the case of the churches, what were these shelves made *for*? And could they be made at all without a great abundance of hands? These shelves are everywhere to be seen throughout the down-countries of Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire and Cornwall; and, besides this, large tracts of land, amounting to millions of acres, perhaps, which are now downs, heaths, or woodlands, still, if you examine closely, bear the marks of the plough. The fact is, I dare say, that the country has never varied much in the gross amount of its population; but formerly the people were pretty evenly spread over the country, instead of being, as the greater part of them now are, collected together in great masses, where, for the greater part, the idlers live on the labour of the industrious.

At Devizes there is "a most magnificent gaol" which seems large enough "to hold one half of the able-bodied men in the country!" The sight of labourers returning from digging potatoes from their vegetable plots is another example of a system by which "honest and laborious men can be compelled to starve quietly . . . with old wheat ricks and fat cattle under their eye." Between Warminster and Westbury thirty or forty men in receipt of parish relief are at work turning over with spades a field of some twelve acres. This is "as cheap as ploughing and four times as good," but why not, asks Cobbett, "give the men higher wages and let them do more work?" Still, he prefers this sort of employment to road work. Passing through "the vile rotten borough of Calne," he comes to Wootton Bassett, "a mean, vile place, though the country all around it is very fine."

In coming from Wotton-Basset to Highworth, I left Swindon a few miles away to my left, and came by the village of Blunsdon. All along here I saw great quantities of hops in the hedges, and very fine hops, and I saw at a village called Stratton, I think it was, the finest *campanula* that I ever saw in my life. The main stalk was more than four feet high, and there were four stalks, none of which were less than three feet high. All through

the country, poor, as well as rich, are very neat in their gardens, and very careful to raise a great variety of flowers. At Blunsdon I saw a clump, or, rather, a sort of orchard, of as fine walnut-trees as I ever beheld, and loaded with walnuts. Indeed I have seen great crops of walnuts all the way from London. From Blunsdon to this place is but a short distance, and I got here about two or three o'clock. This is a *cheese country*; some corn, but, generally speaking, it is a country of dairies. The sheep here are of the large kind; a sort of Leicester sheep, and the cattle chiefly for milking. The ground is a stiff loam at top, and a yellowish stone under. The houses are almost all built of stone. It is a tolerably rich, but by no means a gay and pretty country. Highworth has a situation corresponding with its name. On every side you go up-hill to it, and from it you see to a great distance all round and into many counties.

Lord Folkestone's estate exemplifies the advantages of master's and servant's working in harmony for the improvement of the estate and recognizing each other's worth—"between them, here are most admirable objects in rural affairs."

In 1824, Lord Folkestone bought some locust-trees of me; and he has several times told me that they were growing very finely; but I did not know that they had been planted at Coleshill; and, indeed, I always thought that they had been planted somewhere in the south of Wiltshire. I now found, however, that they were growing at Coleshill, and yesterday I went to see them, and was, for many reasons, more delighted with the sight than with any that I have beheld for a long while. These trees stand in clumps of 200 trees in each, and the trees being four feet apart each way. These clumps make part of a plantation of 30 or 40 acres, perhaps 50 acres. The rest of the ground—that is to say, the ground where the clumps of locusts do not stand—was, at the same time that the locust clumps were, planted with chestnuts, elms, ashes, oaks, beeches, and other trees. These trees were stouter and taller than the locust trees were when the plantation was made. Yet, if you were now to place yourself at a mile's distance from the plantation, you would not think that there was any plantation at all, except the clumps. The fact is, that the other trees have, as they generally do, made, as yet, but very little progress; are not, I should think, upon an average,

more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet, or 5 feet, high; while the clumps of locusts are from 12 to 20 feet high; and I think that I may safely say that the average height is 16 feet. They are the most beautiful clumps of trees that I ever saw in my life. They were, indeed, planted by a clever and most trusty servant, who to say all that can be said in his praise, is, that he is worthy of such a master as he has.

The trees are, indeed, in good land, and have been taken good care of; but the other trees are in the same land; and, while they have been taken the same care of since they were planted, they had not, I am sure, worse treatment before planting than these locust-trees had. At the time when I sold them to my Lord Folkestone, they were in a field at Worth, near Crawley, in Sussex. The history of their transport is this. A Wiltshire waggon came to Worth for the trees on the 14th of March 1824. The waggon had been stopped on the way by the snow; and, though the snow was gone off before the trees were put upon the waggon, it was very cold, and there were sharp frosts and harsh winds. I had the trees taken up, and tied up in hundreds by withes, like so many fagots. They were then put in and upon the waggon, we doing our best to keep the roots inwards in the loading, so as to prevent them from being exposed but as little as possible to the wind, sun, and frost. We put some fern on the top, and, where we could, on the sides; and we tied on the load with ropes, just as we should have done with a load of fagots. In this way they were several days upon the road; and I do not know how long it was before they got safe into the ground again. All this shows how hardy these trees are, and it ought to admonish gentlemen to make pretty strict inquiries, when they have gardeners, or bailiffs, or stewards, under whose hands locust-trees die, or do not thrive.

N.B.—Dry as the late summer was, I never had my locust-trees so fine as they are this year. I have some, they write me, five feet high, from seed sown just before I went to Preston the first time, that is to say, on the 13th of May. I shall advertise my trees in the next *Register*. I never had them so fine, though the great drought has made the number comparatively small. Lord Folkestone bought of me 13,600 trees. They are, at this moment, worth the money they cost him, and in addition the cost of planting, and in addition to that, they are worth the fee simple

of the ground (very good ground) on which they stand; and this I am able to demonstrate to any man in his senses. What a difference in the value of Wiltshire if all its elms were locusts! As fuel, a foot of locust-wood is worth four or five of any English wood. It will burn better green than almost any other wood will dry. If men want woods, beautiful woods, and *in a hurry*, let them go and see the clumps at Coleshill. Think of a wood 16 feet high, and I may say 20 feet high, in twenty-nine months from the day of planting; and the plants, on an average, not more than two feet high when planted! Think of that: and any one may see it at Coleshill. See what efforts gentlemen make *to get a wood*! How they look at the poor slow-growing things for years; when they might, if they would, have it at once: really almost at a wish; and, with due attention, in almost any soil; and the most valuable of woods into the bargain. Mr Palmer, the bailiff, showed me, near the house at Coleshill, a locust tree which was planted about 35 years ago, or perhaps 40. He had measured it before. It is eight feet and an inch round at a foot from the ground. It goes off afterwards into two principal limbs; which two soon becomes six limbs, and each of these limbs is three feet round. So that here are six everlasting gate posts to begin with. This tree is worth £20 at the least farthing.

I saw also at Coleshill the most complete farm-yard that I ever saw, and that I believe there is in all England, many and complete as English farm-yards are. This was the contrivance of Mr Palmer, Lord Folkestone's bailiff and steward. The master gives all the credit of plantation, and farm, to the servant; but the servant ascribes a good deal of it to the master. Between them, at any rate, here are some most admirable objects in rural affairs. And here, too, there is no misery amongst those who do the work; those without whom there could have been no locust-plantations and no farm-yard. Here all are comfortable; gaunt hunger here stares no man in the face. That some disposition which sent Lord Folkestone to visit John Knight in the dungeons at Reading, keeps pinching hunger away from Coleshill. It is a very pretty spot all taken together. It is chiefly grazing land; and though the making of cheese and bacon is, I dare say, the most profitable part of the farming here, Lord Folkestone fats oxen, and has a stall for it, which ought to be shown to foreigners, instead of the spinning jennies. A fat ox is a finer



thing than a cheese, however good. There is a dairy here too, and beautifully kept. When this stall is full of oxen, and they all fat, how it would make a French farmer stare! It would make even a Yankee think that "Old England" was a respectable "mother," after all. If I had to show this village off to a Yankee, I would blindfold him all the way to, and after I got him out of, the village, lest he should see the scarecrows of paupers on the road.

A belated reading of the newspapers rouses the usual degree of scorn for such items as the bestowal of an annuity, proposals for the improvement of Hyde Park, and so on. After a week at Highworth, Cobbett sets off for Malmesbury.

### MALMSBURY (WILTS).

*Monday, 11 Sept.*

I was detained at Highworth partly by the rain and partly by company that I liked very much. I left it at six o'clock yesterday morning, and got to this town about three or four o'clock in the afternoon, after a ride, including my deviations, of 34 miles; and as pleasant a ride as man ever had. I got to a farm-house in the neighbourhood of Cricklade to breakfast, at which house I was very near to the source of the river Isis, which is, they say, the first branch of the Thames. They call it the "Old Thames," and I rode through it here, it not being above four or five yards wide, and not deeper than the knees of my horse.

The land here, and all round Cricklade, is very fine. Here are some of the very finest pastures in all England, and some of the finest dairies of cows, from 40 to 60 in a dairy, grazing in them.

I saw in one single farm-yard here more food than enough for four times the inhabitants of the parish; and this yard did not contain a tenth, perhaps, of the produce of the parish; but while the poor creatures that raise the wheat and the barley and cheese and the mutton and the beef are living upon potatoes, an accursed *canal* comes kindly through the parish to convey away the wheat and all the good food to the tax-eaters and their attendants in the Wen! What, then, is this "an improvement?" Is a nation *richer* for the carrying away of the food from those

who raise it, and giving it to bayonet men and others, who are assembled in great masses? I could broom-stick the fellow who would look me in the face and call this "an improvement."

He continues his survey of the churches and of the state of their parsonages, and has much in the usual strain to say of the parsons and their tithes. An interesting nature observation intervenes:

From Sharncut I came through a very long and straggling village, called Somerford, another called Ocksey, and another called Crudwell. Between Somerford and Ocksey I saw, on the side of the road, more *goldfinches* than I had ever seen together; I think fifty times as many as I had ever seen at one time in my life. The favourite food of the goldfinch is the seed of the *thistle*. This seed is just now dead ripe. The thistles are all cut and carried away from the fields by the harvest; but they grow alongside the roads; and, in this place, in great quantities. So that the goldfinches were got here in flocks, and, as they continued to fly along before me, for nearly half a mile, and still sticking to the road and the banks, I do believe I had, at last, a flock of ten thousand flying before me. *Birds* of every kind, including partridges and pheasants and all sorts of poultry, are most abundant this year. The fine, long summer has been singularly favourable to them; and you see the effect of it in the great broods of chickens and ducks and geese and turkeys in and about every farm-yard.

Cobbett likes Malmesbury, the remains of its abbey, and the market cross:

When I got in here yesterday, I went, at first, to an inn; but I very soon changed my quarters for the house of a friend, who and whose family, though I had never seen them before, and had never heard of them until I was at Highworth, gave me a hearty reception, and precisely in *the style* that I like. This town, though it has nothing particularly engaging in itself, stands upon one of the prettiest spots that can be imagined. Besides the river Avon, which I went down in the south-east part of the country, here is another river Avon, which runs down to Bath, and two branches, or sources, of which meet here. There is a pretty ridge of ground, the base of which is a mile or a mile and a half wide. On each side of this ridge a branch of the river

runs down, through a flat of very fine meadows. The town and the beautiful remains of the famous old abbey stand on the rounded spot which terminates this ridge; and, just below, nearly close to the town, the two branches of the river meet; and then they begin to be called *the Avon*. The land round about is excellent, and of a great variety of forms. The trees are lofty and fine: so that what with the water, the meadows, the fine cattle and sheep, and, as I hear, the absence of *hard-pinching* poverty, this is a very pleasant place. There remains more of the abbey than, I believe, of any of our monastic buildings, except that of Westminster, and those that have become cathedrals. The church service is performed in the part of the abbey that is left standing. The parish church has fallen down and is gone; but the tower remains, which is made use of for the bells; but the abbey is used as the church, though the church-tower is at a considerable distance from it. It was once a most magnificent building; and there is now a *doorway* which is the most beautiful thing I ever saw, and which was, nevertheless, built in Saxon times, in "the *dark ages*."

There is a *market-cross* in this town, the sight of which is worth a journey of hundreds of miles. Time, with his scythe, and "enlightened Protestant piety," with its pick-axes and crow-bars; these united have done much to efface the beauties of this monument of ancient skill and taste, and proof of ancient wealth; but in spite of all their destructive efforts this cross still remains a most beautiful thing, though possibly, and even probably, nearly, or quite, a thousand years old. There is a *market-cross* lately erected at Devizes, and intended to imitate the ancient ones. Compare that with this, and then you have, pretty fairly, a view of the difference between us and our forefathers of the "dark ages."

To-morrow I start for Bollitree, near Ross, Herefordshire, my road being across the county, and through the city of Gloucester.

## XXIII

### *A Ride from Malmesbury, in Wiltshire, through Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and Worcestershire*

STROUD (GLOUCESTERSHIRE),

*Tuesday Forenoon, 12 Sept. 1826*

I SET off from Malmesbury this morning at 6 o'clock, in as sweet and bright a morning as ever came out of the heavens, and leaving behind me as pleasant a house and as kind hosts as I ever met with in the whole course of my life, either in England or America; and that is saying a great deal indeed. This circumstance was the more pleasant, as I had never before either seen or heard of these kind, unaffected, sensible, *sans-façons*, and most agreeable friends. From Malmesbury I first came, at the end of five miles, to Tutbury, which is in Gloucestershire, there being here a sort of dell, or ravine, which, in this place, is the boundary line of the two counties, and over which you go on a bridge, one-half of which belongs to each county. And now, before I take my leave of Wiltshire, I must observe that, in the whole course of my life (days of *courtship* excepted, of course), I never passed seventeen pleasanter days than those which I have just spent in Wiltshire. It is, especially in the southern half, just the sort of country that I like; the weather has been pleasant; I have been in good houses and amongst good and beautiful gardens; and, in *every* case, I have not only been most kindly entertained, but my entertainers have been of just the stamp that I like.

I saw again, this morning, large flocks of *goldfinches* feeding on the thistle-seed on the roadside. The French call this bird by a name derived from the thistle, so notorious has it always been that they live upon this seed. *Thistle* is, in French, *chardon*; and the French call this beautiful little bird *char-donaret*. I never could have supposed that such flocks of these birds would ever be seen in England. But it is a great year for all the feathered race, whether wild or tame: naturally so, indeed; for every one knows that it is the *wet*, and not the *cold*,

that is injurious to the breeding of birds of all sorts, whether land-birds or water-birds. They say that there are, this year, double the usual quantity of ducks and geese: and, really, they do seem to swarm in the farm-yards, wherever I go. It is a great mistake to suppose that ducks and geese *need* water, except to drink. There is, perhaps, no spot in the world, in proportion to its size and population, where so many of these birds are reared and fatted as in Long Island; and it is not in one case out of ten that they have any ponds to go to, or that they ever see any water other than water that is drawn up out of a well.

A little way before I got to Tutbury I saw a woman digging some potatoes in a strip of ground making part of a field nearly an oblong square, and which field appeared to be laid out in strips. She told me that the field was part of a farm (to the homestead of which she pointed); that it was, by the farmer, *let out* in strips to labouring people; that each strip contained a rood (or quarter of a statute acre); that each married labourer rented one strip; and that the annual rent was a *pound* for the strip. Now the taxes being all paid by the farmer; the fences being kept in repair by him; and, as appeared to me, the land being exceedingly good: all these things considered, the rent does not appear to be too high.

Cobbett observes that the letting of land to the labourers in this way has been necessitated by the enclosure of commons and he regards it as an attempt to remedy present evils by a return to the common-field system of the Middle Ages. He is careful to suggest that the strips would be better used in growing wheat than in raising potatoes, the crop he so much hates.

Nearing Tetbury, or "Tutbury," he meets "a good many people, in twos, threes, or fives, some running, and some walking fast" who are pursuing a man whom they accuse of cabbage stealing. A word or two from Cobbett seems to change the complexion of the matter:

"What! do you call that *stealing*; and would you punish a man, a poor man, and therefore, in all likelihood, a hungry man too, and moreover an old man; do you set up a hue-and-cry after, and would you punish, such a man for taking a few cabbages, when that Holy Bible, which, I dare say, you profess to believe in, and perhaps assist to circulate, teaches you that the hungry man may, without committing any offence at all, go into



his neighbour's vineyard and eat his fill of grapes, one bunch of which is worth a sack-full of cabbages?" "Yes; but he is a very bad character." "Why, my friend, very poor and almost starved people are apt to be 'bad characters;' but the Bible, in both Testaments, commands us to be merciful to the poor, to feed the hungry, to have compassion on the aged; and it makes no exception as to the 'character' of the parties." Another group or two of the pursuers had come up by this time; and I, bearing in mind the fate of Don Quixote when he interfered in somewhat similar cases, gave my horse the hint, and soon got away; but though doubtless I made no converts, I, upon looking back, perceived that I had slackened the pursuit! The pursuers went more slowly; I could see that they got to talking; it was now the step of deliberation rather than that of decision; and though I did not like to call upon Mr Glover, I hope he was merciful. It is impossible for me to witness scenes like this; to hear a man called *a thief* for such a cause; to see him thus eagerly and vindictively pursued for having taken some cabbages in a garden: it is impossible for me to behold such a scene, without calling to mind the practice in the United States of America, where, if a man were even to talk of prosecuting another (especially if that other were poor or old) for taking from the land, or from the trees, any part of a growing crop, for his own personal and immediate use; if any man were even to talk of prosecuting another for such an act, such talker would be held in universal abhorrence: people would hate him; and, in short, if rich as Ricardo or Baring, he might live by himself; for no man would look upon him as a neighbour.

As in an earlier ride, the edge of the Cotswold country yields attractive scenery, though Cobbett still objects to the local stone.

Tutbury is a very pretty town, and has a beautiful ancient church. The country is high along here for a mile or two towards Avening, which begins a long and deep and narrow valley, that comes all the way down to Stroud. When I got to the end of the high country, and the lower country opened to my view, I was at about three miles from Tutbury, on the road to Avening, leaving the Minchinghampton road to my right. Here I was upon the edge of the high land, looking right down upon the village of Avening, and seeing, just close to it,

a large and fine mansion-house, a beautiful park, and, making part of the park, one of the finest, most magnificent woods (of 200 acres, I dare say), lying facing me, going from a valley up a gently-rising hill.

From Avening I came on through Nailsworth, Woodchester, and Rodborough to this place. These villages lie on the sides of a narrow and deep valley, with a narrow stream of water running down the middle of it, and this stream turns the wheels of a great many mills and sets of machinery for the making of *woollen-cloth*. The factories begin at Avening, and are scattered all the way down the valley. There are steam-engines as well as water powers. The work and the trade is so flat that in, I should think, much more than a hundred acres of ground, which I have seen to-day, covered with rails or racks, for the drying of cloth, I do not think that I have seen one single acre where the racks had cloth upon them.

The sub-soil here is a yellowish ugly stone. The houses are all built with this; and it being ugly, the stone is made *white* by a wash of some sort or other. The land on both sides of the valley, and all down the bottom of it, has plenty of trees on it; it is chiefly pasture land, so that the green and the white colours, and the form and great variety of the ground, and the water, and altogether make this a very pretty ride. Here are a series of spots, every one of which a lover of landscapes would like to have painted. Even the buildings of the factories are not ugly. The people seem to have been constantly well off. A pig in almost every cottage sty; that is the infallible mark of a happy people. At present this valley suffers; and though cloth will always be wanted, there will yet be much suffering even here, while at Uly and other places they say the suffering is great indeed.

#### HUNTLEY,

#### *Between Gloucester and Ross*

From Stroud I came up to Pitchcomb, leaving Painswick on my right. From the lofty hill at Pitchcomb I looked down into the great flat and almost circular vale, of which the city of Gloucester is in the centre. To the left I saw the Severn, become a sort of arm of the sea; and before me I saw the hills that divide this county from Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The hill

is a mile down. When down, you are amongst dairy-farms and orchards all the way to Gloucester, and, this year, the orchards, particularly those of pears, are greatly productive. I intended to sleep at Gloucester, as I had, when there, already come twenty-five miles, and as the fourteen, which remained for me to go, in order to reach Bollitree, in Herefordshire, would make about nine more than either I or my horse had a taste for.

He does not, however, stay the night in Gloucester. Charges for accommodation are high, as a musical festival is being held in the cathedral. So, railing against such "profligate pranks" as "scandalous" and "beastly," Cobbett leaves the "assemblages of player-folks, half rogues and half fools," and rides on to Huntley.

I got to this village, about eight miles from Gloucester, by five o'clock: it is now half-past seven, and I am going to bed with an intention of getting to Bollitree (six miles only) early enough in the morning to catch my sons in bed if they play the sluggard.

BOLLITREE,

*Wednesday, 13 Sept.*

This morning was most beautiful. There has been rain here now, and the grass begins (but only begins) to grow. When I got within two hundred yards of Mr Palmer's, I had the happiness to meet my son Richard, who said that he had been up an hour. As I came along I saw one of the prettiest sights in the *flower* way that I ever saw in my life. It was a little orchard; the grass in it had just taken a start, and was beautifully fresh; and very thickly growing amongst the grass was the purple flowered *Colchicum*, in full bloom. They say that the leaves of this plant which come out in the spring and die away in the summer, are poisonous to cattle if they eat much of them in the spring. The flower, if standing by itself, would be no great beauty; but contrasted thus with the fresh grass, which was a little shorter than itself, it was very beautiful.

Ten days pass before the next record in the Journal. It deal with the state of agriculture and other topics.

Crops have been very bad and prices of meat, cheese, wool, and sheep have all fallen. Then Cobbett rushes off at a tangent and includes an attack on the Scots as a "greedy band of invaders" who compare unfavourably with the Irish—they at least "come to

help to do the work!" He recalls himself with a "Let me see where was I?" and returns to his oft-repeated argument that taxes must be lowered. Poor rates are, in comparison, a small burden and the relief they provide should be regarded as wages. There follows a record of a tour of the district.

RYALL, NEAR UPTON-ON-SEVERN (WORCESTERSHIRE),

*Monday, 25 Sept.*

I set off from Mr Palmer's yesterday, after breakfast, having his son (about 13 years old) as my travelling companion. We came across the country, a distance of about 22 miles, and having crossed the Severn at Upton, arrived here, at Mr John Price's, about two o'clock.

Mr Hanford, of this county, and Mr Canning of Gloucestershire, having dined at Mr Price's yesterday, I went, to-day, with Mr Price to see Mr Hanford at his house and estate at Bredon Hill, which is, I believe, one of the highest in England. The ridge, or, rather, the edge of it, divides, in this part, Worcestershire from Gloucestershire. At the very highest part of it there are the remains of an encampment, or rather, I should think, citadel. In many instances in Wiltshire these marks of fortifications are called castles still; and doubtless there were once castles on these spots. From Bredon Hill you see into nine or ten counties; and those curious bubblings-up, the Malvern Hills, are right before you, and only at about ten miles' distance, in a straight line. As this hill looks over the counties of Worcester, Gloucester, Hereford and part of Warwick and the rich part of Stafford; and as it looks over the vales of Esham, Worcester, and Gloucester, having the Avon and the Severn winding down them, you certainly see from this Bredon Hill one of the very richest spots of England, and I am fully convinced a richer spot than is to be seen in any other country in the world.

The Avon (this is the *third* Avon that I have crossed in this ride) falls into the Severn just below Tewkesbury, through which town we went in our way to Mr Hanford's. These rivers, particularly the Severn, go through, and sometimes overflow, the finest meadows of which it is possible to form an idea. Some of them contain more than a hundred acres each; and the number of cattle and sheep feeding in them is prodigious.

Nine-tenths of the land in these extensive vales appears to me to be pasture, and it is pasture of the richest kind. The sheep are chiefly of the Leicester breed, and the cattle of the Hereford, white face and dark red body, certainly the finest and most beautiful of all horn-cattle. The grass, after the fine rains that we have had, is in its finest possible dress; but here, as in the parts of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire that I have seen, there are no turnips, except those which have been recently sown; and though, amidst all these thousands upon thousands of acres of the finest meadows and grass land in the world, hay is, I hear, seven pounds a ton at Worcester. However, unless we should have very early and even hard frosts, the grass will be so abundant that the cattle and sheep will do better than people are apt to think. But be this as it may, this summer has taught us that our climate is the *best for produce*, after all; and that we cannot have Italian sun and English meat and cheese. We complain of the *drip*; but it is the drip that makes the beef and the mutton.

Mr Hanford's house is on the side of Bredon Hill, about a third part up it, and is a very delightful place. The house is of ancient date, and it appears to have been always inhabited by and the property of Roman Catholics; for there is, in one corner of the very top of the building, up in the very roof of it, a Catholic chapel, as ancient as the roof itself. It is about twenty-five feet long and ten wide. It has arch-work to imitate the roof of a church. At the back of the altar there is a little room, which you enter through a door going out of the chapel; and adjoining this little room there is a closet, in which is a trap-door made to let the priest down into one of those hiding-places which were contrived for the purpose of evading the grasp of those greedy Scotch minions, to whom that pious and tolerant Protestant, James I., delivered over those English gentlemen who remained faithful to the religion of their fathers.

Cobbett explains that he is a Protestant of the Church of England, but that he writes as he does of the Catholic religion out of a sense of justice. He likes "a religion, any religion, that tends to make men innocent and benevolent and happy, by taking the best possible means of furnishing them with plenty to eat and drink and wear."



WORCESTER,  
*Tuesday, 26 Sept.*

Mr Price rode with us to this city, which is one of the cleanest, neatest, and handsomest towns I ever saw: indeed, I do not recollect to have seen any one equal to it. The *cathedral* is, indeed, a poor thing, compared with any of the others, except that of Hereford; and I have seen them all but those of Carlisle, Durham, York, Lincoln, Chester, and Peterborough; but the *town* is, I think, the very best I ever saw; and which is, indeed, the greatest of all recommendations, the *people* are, upon the whole, the most suitably dressed and most decent looking people. The town is precisely in character with the beautiful and rich country, in the midst of which it lies. Everything you see gives you the idea of real, solid wealth.

At Worcester he finds "cordial and sensible friends" with some of whom he dines. He speaks of the hop harvest, which has been good, and of the superiority of the Kentish over the Worcestershire hops. He accepts a standing invitation:

STANFORD PARK,  
*Wednesday Morning, 27 Sept.*

In a letter which I received from Sir Thomas Winnington (one of the members for this county) last year, he was good enough to request that I would call upon him if I ever came into Worcestershire, which I told him I would do; and accordingly here we are in his house, situated, certainly, in one of the finest spots in all England. We left Worcester yesterday about ten o'clock, crossed the Severn, which runs close by the town, and came on to this place, which lies in a north-western direction from Worcester, at 14 miles distance from that city, and at about six from the borders of Shropshire. About four miles back we passed by the park and through the estate of Lord Foley, to whom is due the praise of being a most indefatigable and successful *planter of trees*. He seems to have taken uncommon pains in the execution of this work; and he has the merit of disinterestedness, the trees being chiefly oaks, which he is *sure* he can never see grow to timber. We crossed the Teme river just before we got here. Sir Thomas was out shooting; but he soon came home, and gave us a very polite reception. I had time,

yesterday, to see the place, to look at trees, and the like, and I wished to get away early this morning; but being prevailed on to stay to breakfast, here I am, at six o'clock in the morning, in one of the best and best-stocked private libraries that I ever saw; and, what is more, the owner, from what passed yesterday, when he brought me hither, convinced me that he was acquainted with the *insides* of the books. I asked, and shall ask, no questions about who got these books together; but the collection is such as, I am sure, I never saw before in a private house.

The house and stables and courts are such as they ought to be for the great estate that surrounds them; and the park is everything that is beautiful. On one side of the house, looking over a fine piece of water, you see a distant valley, opening between lofty hills; on another side the ground descends a little at first, then goes gently rising for a while, and then rapidly, to the distance of a mile perhaps, where it is crowned with trees in irregular patches, or groups, single and most magnificent trees being scattered all over the whole of the park; on another side, there rise up beautiful little hills, some in the form of barrows on the downs, only forty or a hundred times as large, one or two with no trees on them, and others topped with trees; but on one of these little hills, and some yards higher than the lofty trees which are on this little hill, you see rising up the tower of the parish church, which hill is, I think, taken all together, amongst the most delightful objects that I ever beheld.

And here, thinks Cobbett, is an excellent place in which to retire and forget the "cursed politics." But he has yet much to accomplish before he can yield to the "devil of laziness," so he orders the horses to be saddled!

RYALL,

*Wednesday Night, 27 Sept.*

After breakfast we took our leave of Sir Thomas Winnington, and of Stanford, very much pleased with our visit. We wished to reach Ryall as early as possible in the day, and we did not, therefore, stop at Worcester. We got here about three o'clock, and we intend to set off, in another direction, early in the morning.

## XXIV

### *A Ride from Ryall, in Worcestershire, to Burghclere, in Hampshire*

ALWAYS a staunch advocate of rural cottage industries, Cobbett is pleased to find one in operation in Worcestershire, and considers this to be one of the reasons for the happy appearance of the labourers in that part of the country.

RYALL,

*Friday Morning, 29 September 1826*

I have observed in this country, and especially near Worcester, that the working people seem to be better off than in many other parts, one cause of which is, I dare say, that *glove manufacturing*, which cannot be carried on by fire or by wind or by water, and which is, therefore, carried on by the *hands* of human beings. It gives work to women and children as well as to men; and that work is, by a great part of the women and children, done in their cottages, and amidst the fields and hop-gardens, where the husbands and sons must live, in order to raise the food and the drink and the wool. This is a great thing for the land. If this glove-making were to cease, many of these women and children, now not upon the parish, must instantly be upon the parish. The glove-trade is, like all others, slack from this last change in the value of money; but there is no horrible misery here, as at Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, Paisley, and other Hell-Holes of 84 degrees of heat.

Where manufacturing is mixed with agriculture, where the wife and daughters are at the needle, or the wheel, while the men and the boys are at plough, and where the manufacturing, of which one or two towns are the centres, is spread over the whole country round about, and particularly where it is, in very great part, performed by females at their *own homes*, and where the earnings come *in aid of the man's wages*; in such case the misery cannot be so great; and accordingly, while there is an absolute destruction of life going on in the hell-holes, there is no *visible*

misery at, or near, Worcester; and I cannot take my leave of this county without observing, that I do not recollect to have seen one miserable object in it. The working people all seem to have good large gardens, and pigs in their styers.

Though they are not so obvious as in some other counties, yet here, too, are examples of dilapidated parsonages, depopulated villages, large churches for small congregations, and absentee clergy. Landowners who see the countryside thus despoiled, yet pay their taxes without a protest, are stigmatized as "cowardly reptiles," and Cobbett attacks the country clergy for abuses of which he considers them guilty. He proceeds to some observations on the growing of lucerne and cabbages.

I have seen in this county, and in Herefordshire, several pieces of mangel wurzel; and I hear that it has nowhere failed, as the turnips have. Even the lucerne has, in some places, failed to a certain extent; but Mr Walter Palmer, at Pencoyd, in Herefordshire, has cut a piece of lucerne four times this last summer, and when I saw it on the 27th Sept. (12 days ago) it was got a foot high towards another cut. But, with one exception (too trifling to mention), Mr Walter Palmer's lucerne is on the Tullian plan; that is, it is in rows at four feet distance from each other; so that you plough between as often as you please, and thus, together with a little hand weeding between the plants, keep the ground, at all times, clear of weeds and grass. Mr Palmer says that his acre (he has no more) has kept two horses all the summer; and he seems to complain that it has done no more. Indeed! A stout horse will eat much more than a fattening ox. This grass will fat any ox or sheep; and would not Mr Palmer like to have ten acres of land that would fat a score of oxen? They would do this if they were managed well. But is it *nothing* to keep a team of four horses, for five months in the year, on the produce of two acres of land? If a man say that, he must, of course, be eagerly looking forward to another world; for nothing will satisfy him in this. A good crop of early cabbages may be had between the rows of lucerne.

*Cabbages* have, generally, wholly failed. Those that I see are almost all too backward to make much of heads; though it is surprising how fast they will grow and come to perfection as soon as there is *twelve hours of night*. I am here, however, speaking

of the large sorts of cabbage; for the smaller sorts will loave in summer. Mr Walter Palmer has now a piece of these, of which I think there are from 17 to 20 *tons* to the acre; and this too, observe, after a season which on the same farm has not suffered a turnip of any sort to come. If he had had 20 acres of these, he might have almost laughed at the failure of his turnips, and at the short crop of hay. And this is a crop of which a man may always be *sure*, if he take proper pains. These cabbages (Early Yorks or some such sort) should, if you want them in June or July, be sown early in the previous August. If you want them in winter, sown in April, and treated as pointed out in my *Cottage Economy*. These small sorts stand the winter better than the large; they are more nutritious; and they occupy the ground little more than half the time. *Dwarf savoys* are the finest and richest and most nutritious of cabbages. Sown early in April, and planted out early in July, they will, at 18 inches apart each way, yield a crop of 30 to 40 tons by Christmas. But all this supposes land very good, or very well manured, and plants of a good sort, and well raised and planted, and the ground well tilled after planting; and a crop of 30 tons is worth all these and all the care and all the pains that a man can possibly take.

I am here amongst the finest of cattle, and the finest sheep of the Leicester kind, that I ever saw. My host, Mr Price, is famed as a breeder of cattle and sheep. The cattle are of the Hereford kind, and the sheep surpassing any animals of the kind that I ever saw. The animals seem to be made for the soil, and the soil for them.

In taking leave of this county I repeat, with great satisfaction, what I before said about the apparent comparatively happy state of the labouring people; and I have been very much pleased with the tone and manner in which they are spoken to and spoken of by their superiors. I hear of no *hard* treatment of them here, such as I have but too often heard of in some counties, and too often witnessed in others; and I quit Worcestershire, and particularly the house in which I am, with all those feelings which are naturally produced by the kindest of receptions from frank and sensible people.

On his previous visit to Cheltenham Cobbett had no good to say of the place, and this time he gives his powers of abuse full rein:



From Ryall, in Worcestershire, we came yesterday (Friday) morning first to Tewksbury in Gloucestershire. This is a good, substantial town.

The Warwickshire Avon falls into the Severn here, and on the sides of both, for many miles back, there are the finest meadows that ever were seen. In looking over them, and beholding the endless flocks and herds, one wonders what can become of all the meat! By riding on about eight or nine miles farther, however, this wonder is a little diminished; for here we come to one of the devouring Wens; namely, Cheltenham, which is what they call a "watering place"; that is to say, a place to which East India plunderers, West India floggers, English tax-gorgers, together with gluttons, drunkards, and debauchees of all descriptions, female as well as male, resort, at the suggestion of silently laughing quacks, in the hope of getting rid of the bodily consequences of their manifold sins and iniquities. When I enter a place like this, I always feel disposed to squeeze up my nose with my fingers. It is nonsense, to be sure; but I conceit that every two-legged creature that I see coming near me is about to cover me with the poisonous proceeds of its impurities. To places like this come all that is knavish and all that is foolish and all that is base; gamesters, pickpockets, and harlots; young wife-hunters in search of rich and ugly and old women, and young husband-hunters in search of rich and wrinkled or half-rotten men.

The whole town (and it is now ten o'clock) looked delightfully dull. I did not see more than four or five carriages and, perhaps, twenty people on horseback. The place really appears to be sinking very fast; and I have been told, and believe the fact, that houses, in Cheltenham, will now sell for only just about one-third as much as the same would have sold for only in last October. It is curious to see the names which the vermin owners have put upon the houses here. There is a new row of most gaudy and fantastical dwelling places, called "Colombia Place," given it, doubtless, by some dealer in *bonds*. There is what a boy told us was the "*New Spa*;" there is "*Waterloo House*!" Oh! how I rejoice at the ruin of the base creatures! There is "*Liverpool Cottage*," "*Canning Cottage*," "*Peel Cottage*;" and the good of it is, that the ridiculous beasts have put this word *cottage* upon scores of houses, and some very mean and shabby houses, standing along, and making part of an unbroken

street! What a figure this place will cut in another year or two! I should not wonder to see it nearly wholly deserted. It is situated in a nasty, flat, stupid spot, without anything pleasant near it. A putting down of the one-pound notes will soon take away its *spa*-people. Those of the notes that have already been cut off have, it seems, lessened the quantity of ailments very considerably; another brush will cure all the complaints!

They have had some rains in the summer not far from this place; for we saw in the streets very fine turnips for sale as vegetables, and broccoli with heads six or eight inches over! But as to the meat it was nothing to be compared with that of Warminster, in Wiltshire; that is to say, the veal and lamb. I have paid particular attention to this matter, at Worcester and Tewksbury as well as at Cheltenham; and I have seen no veal and no lamb to be compared with those of Warminster. I have been thinking, but cannot imagine how it is, that the Wen-Devils, either at Bath or London, do not get this meat away from Warminster. I hope that my observations on it will not set them to work: for, if it do, the people of Warminster will never have a bit of good meat again.

Similarly he persists in his objection to the Cotswold country and its stone:

After Cheltenham we had to reach this pretty little town of Fairford, the regular turnpike-road to which lay through Cirencester; but I had from a fine map, at Sir Thomas Winnington's, traced out a line for us along through a chain of villages, leaving Cirencester away to our right, and never coming nearer than seven or eight miles to it. We came through Dodeswell, Withington, Chedworth, Winston, and the two Colnes. At Dodeswell we came up a long and steep hill, which brought us out of the great vale of Gloucester and up upon the Cotswold Hills, which name is tautological, I believe; for I think that *wold* meant *high lands of great extent*. Such is the Cotswold, at any rate, for it is a tract of country stretching across, in a south-easterly direction, from Dodeswell to near Fairford, and in a north-easterly direction from Pitchcomb Hill, in Gloucestershire (which, remember, I descended on the 12th September), to near Witney in Oxfordshire. Here we were, then, when we got fairly up upon the wold, with the vale of Gloucester at our

back, Oxford and its vale to our left, the vale of Wiltshire to our right, and the vale of Berkshire in our front: and from one particular point I could see a part of each of them. This wold is, in itself, an ugly country. The soil is what is called a *stone brash* below, with a reddish earth mixed with little bits of this brash at top, and, for the greater part of the wold, even this soil is very shallow; and as fields are divided by walls made of this brash, and as there are for a mile or two together, no trees to be seen, and as the surface is not smooth and green like the downs, this is a sort of country having less to please the eye than any other that I have ever seen, always save and except the *heaths* like those of Bagshot and Hindhead. Yet even this wold has many fertile dells in it, and sends out, from its highest parts, several streams, each of which has its pretty valley and its meadows. And here has come down to us, from a distance of many centuries, a particular race of sheep, called the *Cotswold* breed, which are, of course, the best suited to the country. They are short and stocky, and appear to me to be about half way, in point of size, between the Rylands and the South Downs. When crossed with the Leicester, as they are pretty generally in the north of Wiltshire, they make very beautiful and even large sheep; quite large enough, and, people say, very profitable.

A *route*, when it lies through *villages*, is one thing on a *map*, and quite another thing on the ground. Our line of villages from Cheltenham to Fairford was very nearly straight upon the map; but upon the ground it took us round about a great many miles, besides now and then a little going back, to get into the right road; and, which was a great inconvenience, not a public-house was there on our road until we got within eight miles of Fairford. Resolved that not one single farthing of my money should be spent in the Wen of Cheltenham, we came through that place, expecting to find a public-house in the first or second of the villages; but not one was there over the whole of the wold; and though I had, by pocketing some slices of meat and bread at Ryall, provided against this contingency, as far as related to ourselves, I could make no such provision for our horses, and they went a great deal too far without baiting.

There are the usual signs of a decreasing population. Much of the reason for it here, Cobbett argues, is to be found in the increased use of machinery for making blankets in Witney, and the

concentration of this work in the hands of a few large firms. There is consequently a decay in cottage industries.

The crops on the Cotswold have been pretty good; and I was very much surprised to see a scattering of early turnips, and, in some places, decent crops. Upon this wold I saw more early turnips in a mile or two than I saw in all Herefordshire and Worcestershire and in all the rich and low part of Gloucestershire. The high lands always, during the year, and especially during the summer, receive much more of rain than the low lands. The clouds hang about the hills, and the dews, when they rise, go, most frequently, and cap the hills.

Wheat-sowing is yet going on on the wold; but the greater part of it is sown, and not only sown, but up, and in some places high enough to "hide a hare." What a difference! In some parts of England no man thinks of sowing wheat till November, and it is often done in March. If the latter were done on this wold there would not be a bushel on an acre. The ploughing and other work, on the wold, is done in great part by oxen, and here are some of the finest ox-teams that I ever saw.

All the villages down to Fairford are pretty much in the same dismal condition as that of Withington. Fairford, which is quite on the border of Gloucestershire, is a very pretty little market-town, and has one of the prettiest churches in the kingdom. It was, they say, built in the reign of Henry VII.; and one is naturally surprised to see that its windows of beautiful stained glass had the luck to escape, not only the fangs of the ferocious "good Queen Bess"; not only the unsparing plundering minions of James I; but even the devastating ruffians of Cromwell.

We got in here about four o'clock, and at the house of Mr Iles, where we slept, passed, amongst several friends, a very pleasant evening. This morning, Mr Iles was so good as to ride with us as far as the house of another friend at Kempsford, which is the last Gloucestershire parish in our route. At this friend's, Mr Arkall, we saw a fine dairy of about 60 or 80 cows, and a cheese loft with, perhaps, more than two thousand cheeses in it; at least there were many hundreds. This village contains what are said to be the remnants and ruins of a mansion of John of Gaunt. The church is very ancient and very capacious. What tales these churches do tell upon us!

He storms against those who oppose his arguments on population, heaping abuse on them—"impudent, lying beggars," "brazen and insolent vagabonds," and so on.

In coming to Kempsford we got wet, and nearly to the skin. But our friends gave us coats to put on while ours were dried and while we ate our breakfast. In our way to this house, where we now are, Mr Tucky's at Heydon, we called at Mr James Crowdy's, at Highworth, where I was from the 4th to the 9th of September inclusive; but it looked rainy, and therefore we did not alight. We got wet again before we reached this place; but our journey being short, we soon got our clothes dry again.

BURGHCLERE (HAMPSHIRE),

*Monday, 2 October*

Yesterday was a really *unfortunate day*. The morning promised fair; but its promises were like those of Burdett! There was a little snivelling, wet, treacherous frost. We had to come through Swindon, and Mr Tucky had the kindness to come with us, until we got three or four miles on this side (the Hungerford side) of that very neat and plain and solid and respectable market town. Swindon is in Wiltshire, and is in the real fat of the land, all being wheat, beans, cheese, or fat meat. In our way to Swindon, Mr Tucky's farm exhibited to me what I never saw before, four score oxen, all grazing upon one farm, and all nearly fat! They were some Devonshire and some Herefordshire. They were fattening on the grass only, and I should suppose that they are worth, or shortly will be, thirty pounds each. But the great pleasure with which the contemplation of this fine sight was naturally calculated to inspire me was more than counterbalanced by the thought that these fine oxen, this primest of human food, was, aye, every mouthful of it, destined to be devoured in the Wen.

Mind you, there is in my opinion no land in England that surpasses this. There is, I suppose, as good in the three last counties that I have come through; but *better* than this is, I should think, impossible. There is a pasture-field, of about a hundred acres, close to Swindon, belonging to a Mr Goddard, which, with its cattle and sheep, was a most beautiful sight. But everything is full of riches; and as fast as skill and care



and industry can extract these riches from the land, the unseen grasp of taxation, loan-jobbing and monopolizing takes them away, leaving the labourers not half a belly-full, compelling the farmer to pinch them or to be ruined himself, and making even the landowner little better than a steward, or bailiff, for the tax-eaters, Jews and jobbers!

Just before we got to Swindon, we crossed a canal at a place where there is a wharf and a coal-yard, and close by these a gentleman's house, with coach-house, stables, walled-in-garden, paddock *orné*, and the rest of those things, which, all together, make up a *villa*, surpassing the second and approaching towards the first class. Seeing a man in the coal-yard, I asked him to what gentleman the house belonged: "to the *head un o'* the canal," said he. And when, upon further inquiry of him, I found that it was the villa of the chief manager, I could not help congratulating the proprietors of this aquatic concern; for though I did not ask the name of the canal, I could readily suppose that the profits must be prodigious, when the residence of the manager would imply no disparagement of dignity if occupied by a Secretary of State for the Home, or even for the Foreign, department. I mean an *English* Secretary of State; for as to an *American* one, his salary would be wholly inadequate to a residence in a mansion like this.

From Swindon we came up into the *down country*; and these downs rise higher even than the Cotswold. We left Marlborough away to our right, and came along the turnpike-road towards Hungerford, but with a view of leaving that town to our left, further on, and going away, through Ramsbury, towards the northernmost Hampshire hills, under which Burghclere (where we now are) lies. We passed some fine farms upon these downs, the houses and homesteads of which were near the road. My companion, though he had been to London and even to France, had never seen *downs* before; and it was amusing to me to witness his surprise at seeing the immense flocks of sheep which were now (ten o'clock) just going out from their several folds to the downs for the day, each having its shepherd, and each shepherd his dog. We passed the homestead of a farmer Woodman, with *sixteen* banging wheat-ricks in the rick-yard, two of which were old ones; and rick-yard, farm-yard, waste-yard, horse-paddock, and all round about, seemed to be swarming

with fowls, ducks, and turkeys, and on the whole of them not one feather but what was white! Turning our eyes from this sight, we saw, just going out from the folds of this same farm, three separate and numerous flocks of sheep, one of which (the *lamb-flock*) we passed close by the side of. The shepherd told us that his flock consisted of thirteen score and five; but, apparently, he could not, if it had been to save his soul, tell us how many hundreds he had: and, if you reflect a little, you will find that his way of counting is much the easiest and best. This was a most beautiful flock of lambs; short legged and, in every respect, what they ought to be. George, though born and bred amongst sheep-farms, had never before seen sheep with dark-coloured faces and legs; but his surprise, at this sight, was not nearly so great as the surprise of both of us at seeing numerous and very large pieces (sometimes 50 acres together) of very good early turnips, swedish as well as white!

Along here the country is rather *too bare*: here, until you come to Auborne, or Aldbourne, there are *no meadows* in the valleys, and no trees, even round the homesteads. This, therefore, is too naked to please me; but I love *the downs* so much that, if I had to choose, I would live even here, and especially I would *farm* here, rather than on the banks of the Wye in Herefordshire, in the vale of Gloucester, of Worcester, or of Evesham, or even in what the Kentish men call their "garden of Eden." I have now seen (for I have, years back, seen the vales of Taunton, Glastonbury, Honiton, Dorchester and Sherburne) what are deemed the richest and most beautiful parts of England; and if called upon to name the spot which I deem the brightest and most beautiful and, of its extent, *best* of all, I should say the villages of *North Bovant and Bishopstrow*, between Heytesbury and Warminster in Wiltshire; for there is, as appertaining to rural objects, *everything* that I delight in. Smooth and verdant downs in hills and valleys of endless variety as to height and depth and shape; rich corn-land, unencumbered by fences; meadows in due proportion, and those watered at pleasure; and, lastly, the homesteads, and villages, sheltered in winter and shaded in summer by lofty and beautiful trees; to which may be added roads never dirty and a stream never dry.

When we came to Auborne, we got amongst trees again.

This is a *town* and was, manifestly, once a large town. Its church is as big as three of that of Kensington.

A little after we came through Auborne, we turned off to our right to go through Ramsbury to Shallburn, where Tull, the father of the drill-husbandry, began and practised that husbandry at a farm called "Prosperous." Our object was to reach this place (Burghclere) to sleep, and to stay for a day or two; and as I knew Mr Blandy of Prosperous, I determined upon this route, which, besides, took us out of the turnpike-road. We stopped at Ramsbury, to bait our horses.

While our horses were baiting at Ramsbury it began to rain, and by the time that they had done it rained pretty hard, with every appearance of continuing to rain for the day; and it was now about eleven o'clock, we having 18 or 19 miles to go before we got to the intended end of our journey. Having, however, for several reasons, a very great desire to get to Burghclere that night, we set off in the rain; and as we carry no greatcoats, we were wet to the skin pretty soon. Immediately upon quitting Ramsbury, we crossed the river Kennet, and, mounting a highish hill . . . we pushed through coppices and across fields to a little village called Froxfield, which we found to be on the great Bath road. Here, crossing the road and also a run of water, we, under the guidance of a man who was good enough to go about a mile with us, and to whom we gave a shilling and the price of a pot of beer, mounted another hill, from which, after twisting about for awhile, I saw and recognized the out-buildings of Prosperous Farm, towards which we pushed on as fast as we could, in order to keep ourselves in motion so as to prevent our catching cold; for it rained, and incessantly, every step of the way. I had been at Prosperous before, so that I knew Mr Blandy, the owner, and his family, who received us with great hospitality. They took care of our horses, gave us what we wanted in the eating and drinking way, and clothed us, shirts and all, while they dried all our clothes; for not only the things on our bodies were soaked, but those also which we carried in little thin leather rolls, fastened on upon the saddles before us. Notwithstanding all that could be done in the way of despatch, it took more than three hours to get our clothes dry. At last, about three quarters of an hour before sunset, we got on our clothes again and set off: for, as an instance of real bad luck, it ceased to rain the moment

we got to Mr Blandy's. Including the numerous angles and windings, we had nine or ten miles yet to go; but I was so anxious to get to Burghclere, that, contrary to my practice as well as my principle, I determined to encounter the darkness for once, though in cross-country roads, presenting us, at every mile, with ways crossing each other; or forming a Y; or kindly giving us the choice of three, forming the upper part of a Y and a half. Add to this that we were in an enclosed country, the lanes very narrow, deep-worn, and banks and hedges high. There was no moon; but it was starlight, and as I could see the Hampshire hills all along to my right, and knew that I must not get above a mile or so from them, I had a guide that could not deceive me; for as to *asking* the road, in a case like this it is of little use, unless you meet some one at every half mile: for the answer is, *keep right on*; ay, but in ten minutes, perhaps, you come to a Y, or to a T, or to a +.

It was dark by the time that we got to a village called East Woodhay. Sunday evening is the time *for courting* in the country. It is not convenient to carry this on before faces, and at farm-houses and cottages there are no spare apartments; so that the pairs turn out and pitch up, to carry on their negotiations, by the side of stile or a gate. The evening was auspicious; it was *pretty dark*, the *weather mild*, and *Old Michaelmas* (when yearly services end) was fast approaching; and, accordingly, I do not recollect ever having before seen so many negotiations going on within so short a distance. At West Woodhay my horse *cast a shoe*, and as the road was abominably flinty, we were compelled to go at a snail's pace; and I should have gone crazy with impatience had it not been for these ambassadors and ambassadresses of Cupid, to every pair of whom I said something or other. I began by asking the fellow *my road*; and from the tone and manner of his answer I could tell pretty nearly what prospect he had of success, and knew what to say to draw something from him.

We got to Burghclere about eight o'clock, after a very disagreeable day; but we found ample compensation in the house, and all within it, that we were now arrived at.

The persistence of the riders is rewarded by six days' hunting for young George Palmer and two for Cobbett himself. The Journal of the tour closes with remarks on "Mr Budd's crop of Tullian wheat" and on the low rate of farm labourers' wages.

## XXV

### *A Ride from Burghclere to Lyndhurst, in the New Forest*

HURSTBOURN TARRANT

(COMMONLY CALLED UPHUSBAND),

*Wednesday, 11 October 1826*

WHEN quarters are good you are apt to *lurk* in them; but really it was so wet that we could not get away from Burghclere till Monday evening. Being here, there were many reasons for our going to the great fair at Weyhill, which began yesterday, and, indeed, the day before at Appleshaw. These two days are allotted for the selling of sheep only, though the horse-fair begins on the 10th. To Appleshaw they bring nothing but those fine curled-horned and long-tailed ewes, which bring the house-lambs and the early Easter-lambs; and these, which, to my taste, are the finest and most beautiful animals of the sheep kind, come exclusively out of Dorsetshire and out of the part of Somersetshire bordering on that county.

To Weyhill, which is a village of half a dozen houses on a down just above Appleshaw, they bring from the down-farms in Wiltshire and Hampshire, where they are bred, the South Down sheep; ewes to go away into the pasture and turnip countries to have lambs, wethers to be fattened and killed, and lambs (nine months old) to be kept to be sheep. At both fairs there is supposed to be about two hundred thousand sheep.

The prices, taken on a fair average, were, at both fairs, just about one-half what they were last year.

Throughout the fair it is the same, some farmers having to sell at whatever price the dealer cares to fix. The "deceptive" paper-money system, says Cobbett, is the root of the trouble, and if it is not altered the farmers will be ruined. Yet those who benefit from the national expenditure will make no move to have the taxes reduced.

Recalling the case of two men who were hanged at Winchester after a fight with gamekeepers, Cobbett renews his attack on the Game Laws:



From Weyhill I was shown, yesterday, the wood in which took place the battle in which was concerned poor Turner, one of the young men who was hanged at Winchester in the year 1822. There was another young man, named Smith, who was, on account of another game-battle, hanged on the same gallows! And this for the preservation of the *game*, you will observe!

James Turner, aged 28 years, was accused of assisting to kill Robert Baker, gamekeeper to Thomas Asheton Smith, Esq., in the parish of South Tidworth; and Charles Smith, aged 27 years, was accused of shooting at (not killing) Robert Snellgrove, assistant gamekeeper to Lord Palmerston (Secretary at War), at Broadlands, in the parish of Romsey.

In this case there appears to have been a killing, in which Turner *assisted*; and Turner might, by possibility, have given the fatal blow; but in the case of Smith, there was no killing at all. There was a mere *shooting at*, with intention to do him bodily harm. This latter offence was not a crime for which men were put to death, even when there was no assault, or attempt at assault, on the part of the person shot at; this was not a crime punished with death until that terrible act, brought in by the late Lord Ellenborough, was passed, and formed a part of our matchless code, that code which there is such a talk about *softening*; but which softening does not appear to have in view this act, or any portion of the game laws.

In order to form a just opinion with regard to the offence of these two men that have been hanged at Winchester, we must first consider the motives by which they were actuated in committing the acts of violence laid to their charge. For it is the intention, and not the mere act, that constitutes the crime. To make an act murder there must be *malice aforethought*. The question, therefore, is, did these men attack, or were they the attacked? It seems to be clear that they were the attacked parties: for they are executed, according to this publication, to deter others from *resisting* gamekeepers!

It should never be forgotten that, in order to make punishments efficient in the way of example, they must be thought just by the community at large; and they will never be thought just if they aim at the protection of things belonging to one particular class of the community, and especially if those very things be grudged to this class by the community in general. When

punishments of this sort take place, they are looked upon as unnecessary, the sufferers are objects of pity, the common feeling of the community is in their favour instead of being against them; and it is those who cause the punishment, and not those who suffer it, who become objects of abhorrence.

Upon seeing two of our countrymen hanging upon a gallows, we naturally and instantly run back to the cause. First we find the fighting with gamekeepers; next we find that the men would have been transported if caught in or near a cover with guns after dark; next we find that these trespassers are exposed to transportation because they are in pursuit, or supposed to be in pursuit, of partridges, pheasants or hares; and then, we ask, where is the foundation of a law to punish a man with transportation for being in pursuit of these animals? And where, indeed, is the foundation of the law to take from any man, be he who he may, the right of catching and using these animals? We know very well, we are instructed by mere feeling, that we have a right to live, to see and to move. Common sense tells us that there are some things which no man can reasonably call his property; and though poachers (as they are called) do not read *Blackstone's Commentaries*, they know that such animals as are of a wild and untameable disposition any man may seize upon and keep for his own use and pleasure. "All these things, so long as they remain in possession, every man has a right to enjoy without disturbance; but if once they escape from his custody, or he voluntarily abandons the use of them, they return to the common stock, and any man else has an equal right to seize and enjoy them afterwards." (Book 2, chapter 1.)

The law may say what it will, but the feelings of mankind will never be in favour of this code; and whenever it produces putting to death, it will necessarily excite horror. It is impossible to make men believe that any particular set of individuals should have a permanent property in wild creatures. That the owner of land should have a quiet possession of it is reasonable and right and necessary; it is also necessary that he should have the power of inflicting pecuniary punishment, in a moderate degree, upon such as trespass on his lands; but his right can go no further according to reason. If the law give him ample compensation for every damage that he sustains, in consequence of a trespass on his lands, what right has he to complain?

There is a sufficient punishment provided by the law of trespass; quite sufficient means to keep men off your land altogether! how can it be necessary, then, to have a law to transport them for coming upon your land? No, it is not for coming upon the land, it is for coming after the wild animals, which nature and reason tells them are as much theirs as they are yours.

There are the usual signs of depopulation—churches too large for available congregations, houses and farm buildings in dilapidation, and so on. Yet this part of England is a good agricultural area:

In former Rides, and especially in 1821 and 1822, I described very fully this part of Hampshire. The land is a chalk bottom, with a bed of reddish, stiff loam, full of flints at top. In those parts where the bed of loam and flints is deep the land is arable or woods: where the bed of loam and flints is so shallow as to let the plough down to the chalk, the surface is downs. In the deep and long valleys, where there is constantly or occasionally a stream of water, the top soil is blackish and the surface meadows. This has been the distribution from all antiquity, except that, in ancient times, part of that which is now downs and woods was *corn-land*, as we know from the *marks of the plough*.

The tops of the hills here are as good corn-land as any other part; and it is all excellent corn-land, and the fields and woods singularly beautiful. Never was there what may be called a more *hilly* country, and *all in use*. Coming from Burghclere you come up nearly a mile of steep hill, from the top of which you can see all over the country, even to the Isle of Wight; to your right a great part of Wiltshire; into Surrey on your left; and turning round, you see lying below you the whole of Berkshire, great part of Oxfordshire, and part of Gloucestershire. This chain of lofty hills was a great favourite with kings and rulers in ancient times. At Highclere, at Combe, and at other places there are remains of great encampments or fortifications; and Kingsclere was a residence of the Saxon kings, and continued to be a royal residence long after the Norman kings came. King John, when residing at Kingsclere, founded one of the charities which still exists in the town of Newbury, which is but a few miles from Kingsclere.

From the top of this lofty chain you come to Uphusband (or the Upper Hurstbourn) over two miles or more of ground, descending in the way that the body of a snake descends (when he is going fast) from the high part, near the head, down to the tail; that is to say, over a series of hill and dell, but the dell part going constantly on increasing upon the hilly part, till you come down to this village; and then you, continuing on (southward) towards Andover, go up, directly, half a mile of hill so steep as to make it very difficult for an ordinary team with a load to take that load up it. So this *Up-hurstbourn* (called so because *higher up the valley* than the other Hurstbourns), the flat part of the road to which, from the north, comes in between two side-hills, is in as narrow and deep a dell as any place that I ever saw.

The houses of the village are in great part scattered about, and are amongst very lofty and fine trees; and from many, many points round about, from the hilly fields, now covered with the young wheat, or with scarcely less beautiful sainfoin, the village is a sight worth going many miles to see. The lands, too, are pretty beyond description. These chains of hills make, below them, an endless number of lower hills, of varying shapes and sizes and aspects and of relative state as to each other; while the surface presents, in the size and form of the fields, in the woods, the hedgerows, the sainfoin, the young wheat, the turnips, the tares, the fallows, the sheep-folds and the flocks, and at every turn of your head a fresh and different set of these; this surface all together presents that which I, at any rate, could look at with pleasure for ever. Not a sort of country that I like so well as when there are *downs* and a *broader valley* and *more of meadow*; but a sort of country that I like next to that; for here, as there, there are no ditches, no water-furrows, no dirt, and never any drought to cause inconvenience. The chalk is at bottom, and it takes care of all. The crops of wheat have been very good here this year, and those of barley not very bad. The sainfoin has given a fine crop of the finest sort of hay in the world, and this year without a drop of wet.

But the lot of labourers is "dismal" and is bound to remain so with market prices at the prevailing low level. It is while he is making a speech on this topic at a local inn that Cobbett comes into conflict with the landlord:

Having laid my plan to sleep at Andover last night, I went with two Farnham friends, Messrs Knowles and West, to dine at the ordinary at the George Inn, which is kept by one Sutton, a rich old fellow, who wore a round-skirted sleeved fustian waistcoat, with a dirty white apron tied round his middle, and with no coat on; having a look the *eagerest* and the *sharpest* that I ever saw in any set of features in my whole life-time; having an air of authority and of mastership which, to a stranger as I was, seemed quite incompatible with the meanness of his dress and the vulgarity of his manners: and there being, visible to every beholder, constantly going on in him a pretty even contest, between the servility of avarice and the insolence of wealth. A great part of the farmers and other fair-people having gone off home, we found preparations made for dining only about ten people. But after we sat down, and it was seen that we designed to dine, guests came in apace, the preparations were augmented, and as many as could dine came and dined with us.

After the dinner was over the room became fuller and fuller; guests came in from the other inns, where they had been dining, till at last the room became as full as possible in every part, the door being opened, the door-way blocked up, and the stairs leading to the room crammed from bottom to top. In this state of things Mr Knowles, who was our chairman, gave *my health*, which, of course, was followed by a *speech*; and, as the reader will readily suppose, to have an opportunity of making a speech was the main motive for my going to dine at *an inn*, at any hour, and especially at *seven o'clock* at night.

As Cobbett is "descanting on the present devastating ruin" the landlord enters to protest that the meeting is interfering with his trade, but he retires hastily when the assembly suggests throwing him out!

But now behold, the old fustian-jacketed fellow, whose head was, I think, *powdered*, took it into that head not only to lay "restrictions" upon trade, but to impose an absolute embargo; cut off entirely all supplies whatever from his bar to the room, *as long as I remained in that room*. A message to this effect from the old fustian man having been, through the waiter, communicated to Mr Knowles, and he having communicated it to the company, I addressed the company in nearly these words:



"Gentlemen, born and bred, as you know I was, on the borders of this county, and fond as I am of bacon, *Hampshire hogs* have with me always been objects of admiration rather than of contempt; but that which has just happened here induces me to observe that this feeling of mine has been confined to hogs of *four legs*. For my part, I like your company too well to quit it. I have paid this fellow *six shillings* for the wing of a fowl, a bit of bread, and a pint of small beer. I have a right to sit here; I want no drink, and those who do, being refused it here, have a right to send to other houses for it, and to drink it here."

However, Mammon soon got the upper hand downstairs, all the fondness for "free trade" returned, and up came the old fustian-jacketed fellow, bringing pipes, tobacco, wine, grog, sling, and seeming to be as pleased as if he had just sprung a mine of gold! Nay, he soon after this came into the room with two gentlemen, who had come to him to ask where I was. He actually came up to me, making me a bow, and telling me that those gentlemen wished to be introduced to me, he, with a fawning look, laid his hand upon my knee! "Take away your *paw*," said I, and shaking the gentlemen by the hand, I said, "I am happy to see you, gentlemen, even though introduced by this fellow." Things now proceeded without interruption; songs, toasts, and speeches filled up the time, until half-past two o'clock this morning.

Cobbett regrets a departure from his usual custom of setting out before breakfast:

RUMSEY (HAMPSHIRE),

*Monday Noon, 16 Oct.*

Like a very great fool, I, out of senseless complaisance, waited this morning to breakfast with the friends at whose house we slept last night at Andover. We thus lost two hours of dry weather, and have been justly punished by about an hour's ride in the rain. I settled on Lyndhurst as the place to lodge at to-night; so we are here, feeding our horses, drying our clothes, and writing the account of our journey. We came, as much as possible, all the way through the villages, and almost all the way avoided the turnpike-roads. From Andover to Stockbridge (about seven or eight miles) is, for the greatest part,

an open corn and sheep country, a considerable portion of the land being downs. The wheat and rye and vetch and sainfoin fields look beautiful here; and during the whole of the way from Andover to Rumsey the early turnips of both kinds are not bad, and the stubble turnips very promising. The downs are green as meadows usually are in April. The grass is most abundant in all situations where grass grows. From Stockbridge to Rumsey we came nearly by the river side, and had to cross the river several times. This, the river Teste, which, as I described in my Ride of last November, begins at Uphusband by springs, bubbling up in March out of the bed of that deep valley. It is at first a bourn, that is to say, a stream that runs only a part of the year, and is the rest of the year as dry as a road. About five miles from this periodical source it becomes a stream all the year round. After winding about between the chalk hills for many miles, first in a general direction towards the south-east and then in a similar direction towards the south-west and south, it is joined by the little stream that rises just above and that passes through the town of Andover. It is, after this, joined by several other little streams with names; and here, at Rumsey, it is a large and very fine river, famous all the way down for trout and eels, and both of the finest quality.

LYNDHURST (NEW FOREST),

*Monday Evening, 16 October*

I have just time, before I go to bed, to observe that we arrived here about 4 o'clock, over about 10 or 11 miles of the best road in the world, having a choice too, for the great part of the way, between these smooth roads and green sward.

## XXVI

*A Ride from Lyndhurst (New Forest) to Beaulieu Abbey;  
thence to Southampton and Weston; thence to Botley,  
Allington, West End, near Hambledon; and thence to  
Petersfield, Thursley, Godalming*

WESTON GROVE,  
Wednesday, 18 Oct. 1826

YESTERDAY, from Lyndhurst to this place was a ride, including our round-about, of more than forty miles; but the roads the best in the world, one half of the way green turf; and the day as fine an one as ever came out of the heavens. We took in a breakfast, calculated for a long day's work, and for no more eating till night. We had slept in a room, the access to which was only through another sleeping room, which was also occupied; and as I had got up about *two o'clock* at Andover, we went to bed, at Lyndhurst, about *half-past seven o'clock*. I was, of course, awake by three or four; I had eaten little over night; so that here lay I, not liking (even after daylight began to glimmer) to go through a chamber, where, by possibility, there might be "a lady" actually *in bed*; here lay I, my bones aching with lying in bed, my stomach growling for victuals, imprisoned by my *modesty*. But at last I grew impatient; for, modesty here or modesty there, I was not to be penned up and starved: so after having shaved and dressed and got ready to go down, I thrust George out a little before me into the other room; and through we pushed, previously resolving, of course, not to look towards *the bed* that was there. But as the devil would have it, just as I was about the middle of the room, I, like Lot's wife, turned my head! All that I shall say is, first, that the consequences that befell her did not befall me, and, second, that I advise those who are likely to be hungry in the morning not to sleep in *inner rooms*; or, if they do, to take some bread and cheese in their pockets. Having got safe down stairs, I lost no time in inquiry after the means of obtaining a breakfast to make up for the bad fare of the previous day; and finding my landlady

rather tardy in the work, and not, seemingly, having a proper notion of the affair, I went myself, and having found a butcher's shop, bought a loin of small, fat, wether mutton, which I saw cut out of the sheep and cut into chops. These were brought to the inn; George and I ate about 2 lb. out of the 5 lb. and while I was writing a letter, and making up my packet, to be ready to send from Southampton, George went out and found a poor woman to come and take away the rest of the loin of mutton; for our *fastings* of the day before enabled us to do this; and though we had about forty miles to go to get to this place (through the route that we intended to take), I had resolved that we would go without any more *purchase* of victuals and drink this day also. I beg leave to suggest to my *well-fed* readers; I mean, those who have at their command more victuals and drink than they can possibly swallow; I beg to suggest to such, whether this would not be a good way for them all to find the means of bestowing charity? Some poet has said, that that which is given in *charity* gives a blessing on both sides; to the giver as well as the receiver. But I really think that if *in general* the food and drink given came out of food and drink *deducted* from the usual quantity swallowed by the giver, the *blessing* would be still greater, and much more certain. I can speak for myself, at any rate. I hardly ever eat more than *twice* a day; when at home, never; and I never, if I can well avoid it, eat any meat later than about one or two o'clock in the day. I drink a little tea or milk and water at the usual tea-time (about 7 o'clock); I go to bed at eight, if I can; I write or read from about four to about eight, and then hungry as a hunter I go to breakfast, eating *as small a parcel* of cold meat and bread as I can prevail upon my teeth to be satisfied with. I do just the same at dinner time. I very rarely taste *garden-stuff* of any sort. If any man can show me that he has done, or can do, *more work*, bodily and mentally united; I say nothing about good health, for of that the public can know nothing; but I refer to *the work*: the public know, they see what I can do, and what I actually have done, and what I do; and when any one has shown the public that he has done, or can do, more, then I will advise my readers attend to him on the subject of diet and not to me. As to *drink*, the less the better; and mine is milk and water, or *not-sour* small beer, if I can get the latter; for the

former I always can. I like the milk and water best; but I do not like much water; if I drink much milk it loads and stupefies and makes me fat.

Cobbett and his companion, young George Palmer, first visit a plantation called New Park, in the New Forest. Cobbett wishes to find out whether "our prime cocks, the surveyor of woods and forests and crown lands and estates" have done anything in the way of cultivating the locust tree. He finds that some were planted but have not thriven, for the hares have eaten the bark. This infuriates Cobbett. The hares—and the deer—should be kept down. "We are compelled to pay keepers for preserving game to eat up the trees that we are compelled to pay people to plant."

By a somewhat roundabout route the riders next come to Beaulieu, on the local pronunciation of which—"Beuley"—Cobbett has something to say.

We therefore started, or rather turned away from Lyndhurst, as soon as we got back to it, and went about six miles over a heath, even worse than Bagshot Heath; as barren as it is possible for land to be. A little before we came to the village of Beaulieu (which, observe, the people call *Beuley*), we went through a wood, chiefly of beech, and that beech seemingly destined to grow food for pigs, of which we saw, during this day, many, many thousands. I should think that we saw at least a hundred hogs to one deer. I stopped, at one time, and counted the hogs and pigs just round about me, and they amounted to 140, all within 50 or 60 yards of my horse. After a very pleasant ride on land without a stone in it, we came down to the Beaulieu river, the highest branch of which rises at the foot of a hill about a mile and a half to the north-east of Lyndhurst. For a great part of the way down to Beaulieu it is a very insignificant stream. At last, however, augmented by springs from the different sand-hills, it becomes a little river, and has, on the sides of it, lands which were, formerly, very beautiful meadows. When it comes to the village of Beaulieu, it forms a large pond of a great many acres; and on the east side of this pond is the spot where this famous abbey formerly stood, and where the external walls of which, or a large part of them, are now actually standing. We went down on the western side of the river. The abbey stood, and the ruins stand, on the eastern side.



Happening to meet a man before I got into the village I, pointing with my whip across towards the abbey, said to the man, "I suppose there is a bridge down here to get across to the abbey." "That's not the abbey, sir," says he: "the abbey is about four miles further on." I was astonished to hear this; but he was very positive; said that some people called it the abbey; but that the abbey was further on; and was at a farm occupied by farmer John Biel. Having chapter and verse for it, as the saying is, I believed the man; and pushed on towards farmer John Biel's, which I found, as he had told me, at the end of about four miles. When I got there (not having, observe, gone over the water to ascertain that the other was the spot where the abbey stood), I really thought, at first, that this must have been the site of the Abbey of Beaulieu; because, the name meaning *fine place*, this was a thousand times finer place than that where the abbey, as I afterwards found, really stood. After looking about it for some time, I was satisfied that it had not been an abbey; but the place is one of the finest that ever was seen in this world. It stands at about half a mile's distance from the water's edge at high-water mark, and at about the middle of the space along the coast from Calshot Castle to Lymington haven. It stands, of course, upon a rising ground; it has a gentle slope down to the water. To the right, you see Hurst Castle, and that narrow passage called the Needles, I believe; and, to the left, you see Spithead, and all the ships that are sailing or lie anywhere opposite Portsmouth. The Isle of Wight is right before you, and you have in view, at one and the same time, the towns of Yarmouth, Newton, Cowes, and Newport, with all the beautiful fields of the island, lying upon the side of a great bank before, and going up the ridge of hills in the middle of the island. Here are two little streams, nearly close to the ruin, which filled ponds for fresh-water fish; while there was the Beaulieu river at about half a mile or three quarters of a mile to the left, to bring up the salt-water fish. The ruins consist of part of the walls of a building about 200 feet long and about 40 feet wide. It has been turned into a barn, in part, and the rest into cattle-sheds, cow-pens, and inclosures and walls to inclose a small yard. But there is another ruin which was a church or chapel, and which stands now very near to the farm-house of Mr John Biel, who rents the farm of the

Duchess of Buccleugh, who is now the owner of the abbey-lands and of the lands belonging to this place. The little church or chapel, of which I have just been speaking, appears to have been a very beautiful building. A part only of its walls are standing; but you see, by what remains of the arches, that it was finished in a manner the most elegant and expensive of the day in which it was built. Part of the outside of the building is now surrounded by the farmer's garden; the interior is partly a pig-stye and partly a goose-pen. Under that arch which had once seen so many rich men bow their heads, we entered into the goose-pen, which is by no means one of the *niciest* concerns in the world. Beyond the goose-pen was the pig-stye, and in it a hog which, when fat, will weigh about 30 score, actually rubbing his shoulders against a little sort of column which had supported the font and its holy water. The farmer told us that there was a hole, which, indeed, we saw, going down into the wall, or rather into the column where the font had stood. And he told us that many attempts had been made to bring water to fill that hole, but that it never had been done.

Mr Biel was very civil to us. As far as related to us, he performed the office of hospitality, which was the main business of those who formerly inhabited the spot. He asked us to dine with him, which we declined, for want of time; but being exceedingly hungry, we had some bread and cheese and some very good beer. The farmer told me that a great number of gentlemen had come there to look at that place; but that he never could find out what the place had been, or what the place at Beuley had been. I told him that I would, when I got to London, give him an account of it; that I would write the account down, and send it down to him. He seemed surprised that I should make such a promise, and expressed his wish not to give me so much trouble. I told him not to say a word about the matter, for that his bread and cheese and beer were so good that they deserved a full history to be written of the place where they had been eaten and drunk. "God bless me, sir, no, no!" I said I will, upon my soul, farmer. I now left him, very grateful on our part for his hospitable reception, and he, I dare say, hardly being able to believe his own ears at the generous promise that I had made him, which promise, however, I am now about to fulfil.

So he keeps his promise, gives a brief account of the history of Beaulieu Abbey, and shows that the ruins on Mr Biel's farm are those of a hospital of the Knights of St John and not of the abbey. He returns to his oft-repeated argument that these establishments expended their money locally, for the public good, and were not concerned with amassing fortunes.

From the former station of the Templars, from real Beaulieu of the New Forest, we came back to the village of Beaulieu, and there crossed the water to come on towards Southampton. Here we passed close along under the old abbey walls, a great part of which are still standing. There is a mill here which appears to be turned by the fresh water, but the fresh water falls, here, into the salt water, as at the village of Botley. We did not stop to go about the ruins of the abbey; for you seldom make much out by minute inquiry. It is the political history of these places, or, at least, their connection with political events, that is interesting. Just about the banks of this little river there are some woods and coppices and some corn-land; but at the distance of half a mile from the water-side we came out again upon the intolerable heath, and went on for seven or eight miles over that heath, from the village of Beaulieu to that of Marchwood, having a list of trees and enclosed lands away to our right all the way along, which list of trees from the south-west side of that arm of the sea which goes from Calshot Castle to Redbridge, passing by Southampton, which lies on the north-east side. Never was a more barren tract of land than these seven or eight miles. We had come seven miles across the forest in another direction in the morning; so that a poorer spot than this New Forest there is not in all England; nor, I believe, in the whole world. It is more barren and miserable than Bagshot Heath. There are less fertile spots in it in proportion to the extent of each. Still it is so large, it is of such great extent, being, if moulded into a circle, not so little, I believe, as 60 or 70 miles in circumference, that it must contain some good spots of land, and if properly and honestly managed those spots must produce a prodigious quantity of timber.

Yet surveys show an enormous decline in the amount of oak grown in the New Forest.

Cobbett then dwells at some length on his population theme. He returns to the record of his itinerary to describe a beautiful estate by the side of Southampton Water.

It was night-fall when we arrived at Eling, that is to say, at the head of the Southampton Water. Our horses were very hungry. We stopped to bait them, and set off just about dusk to come to this place (Weston Grove), stopping at Southampton on our way, and leaving a letter to come to London.

The moon shone very bright by the time that we mounted the hill; and now, skirting the enclosures upon the edge of the common, we passed several of those cottages which I so well recollected, and in which I had the satisfaction to believe that the inhabitants were sitting comfortably with bellies full by a good fire. It was eight o'clock before we arrived at Mr Chamberlayne's, whom I had not seen since, I think, the year 1816; for in the fall of that year I came to London and I never returned to Botley (which is only about three miles and a half from Weston) to stay there for any length of time. To those who like water-scenes (as nineteen-twentieths of people do) it is the prettiest spot, I believe, in all England. Mr Chamberlayne built the house about twenty years ago. He has been bringing the place to greater and greater perfection from that time to this. All round about the house is in the neatest possible order. I should think that, altogether, there cannot be so little as *ten acres of short grass*; and, when I say *that*, those who know anything about gardens will form a pretty correct general notion as to the *scale* on which the thing is carried on. Until of late, Mr Chamberlayne was owner of only a small part, comparatively, of the lands hereabouts. He is now the owner, I believe, of the whole of the lands that come down to the water's edge and that lie between the ferry over the Itchen at Southampton and the river which goes out from the Southampton Water at Hamble. And now let me describe, as well as I can, what this land and its situation are.

The Southampton Water begins at Portsmouth, and goes up by Southampton to Redbridge, being, upon an average, about two miles wide, having on the one side the New Forest and on the other side, for a great part of the way, this fine and beautiful estate of Mr Chamberlayne. Both sides of this water have rising lands divided into hill and dale, and very beautifully clothed with trees, the woods and lawns and fields being most advantageously intermixed. It is very curious that, at the *back* of each of these tracts of land, there are extensive

heaths, on this side as well as on the New Forest side. To stand here and look across the water at the New Forest, you would imagine that it was really *a country of woods*; for you can see nothing of the heaths from here; those heaths over which we rode, and from which we could see a windmill down among the trees, which windmill is now to be seen just opposite this place. So that the views from this place are the most beautiful that can be imagined. You see up the water and down the water, to Redbridge one way and out to Spithead the other way. Through the trees, to the right, you see the spires of Southampton, and you have only to walk a mile, over a beautiful lawn and through a not less beautiful wood, to find, in a little dell, surrounded with lofty woods, the venerable ruins of *Netley Abbey*, which make part of Mr Chamberlayne's estate.

The woods here are chiefly of oak; the ground consists of a series of hill and dale, as you go long-wise from one end of the estate to the other, *about six miles in length*. Down almost every little valley that divides these hills or hillocks there is more or less of water, making the underwood, in those parts, very thick and dark to go through; and these form the most delightful contrast with the fields and lawns. There are innumerable vessels of various sizes continually upon the water; and to those that delight in water-scenes, this is certainly the very prettiest place that I ever saw in my life. I had seen it many years ago; and as I intended to come here on my way home, I told George, before we set out, that I would show him *another Weston* before we got to London. The parish in which his father's house is, is also called Weston, and a very beautiful spot it certainly is; but I told him I questioned whether I could not show him a still prettier Weston than that. We let him alone for the first day. He sat in the house, and saw great multitudes of pheasants and partridges upon the lawn before the window: he went down to the water-side by himself, and put his foot upon the ground to see the tide rise. He seemed very much delighted. The second morning at breakfast we put it to him which he would rather have; this Weston or the Weston he had left in Herefordshire; but though I introduced the question in a way almost to extort a decision in favour of the Hampshire Weston, he decided instantly and plumped for the other, in a manner very much to the delight of Mr



Chamberlayne and his sister. So true it is, that when people are uncorrupted, they always *like home best*, be it in itself what it may.

Everything that nature can do has been done here; and money most judiciously employed has come to her assistance. Here are a thousand things to give pleasure to any rational mind; but there is one thing which, in my estimation, surpasses, in pleasure to contemplate, all the lawns and all the groves and all the gardens and all the game and everything else; and that is the real, unaffected goodness of the owner of this estate. He is a member for Southampton; he has other fine estates; he has great talents; he is much admired by all who know him; but he has done more by his justice, by his just way of thinking with regard to the labouring people, than in all other ways put together. This was nothing new to me; for I was well informed of it several years ago, though I had never heard him speak of it in my life. When he came to this place the common wages of day-labouring men were *thirteen shillings a week*, and the wages of carpenters, bricklayers, and other tradesmen were in proportion. Those wages he *has given, from that time to this*, without any abatement whatever. With these wages a man can live, having, at the same time, other advantages attending the working for such a man as Mr Chamberlayne. He has got less money in his bags than he would have had if he had ground men down in their wages; but if his sleep be not sounder than that of the hard-fisted wretch that can walk over grass and gravel, kept in order by a poor creature that is half-starved; if his sleep be not sounder than the sleep of such a wretch, then all that we have been taught is false, and there is no difference between the man who feeds and the man who starves the poor: all the Scripture is a bundle of lies, and instead of being propagated it ought to be flung into the fire.

I know of no county where the poor are worse treated than in many parts of this county of Hants. It is happy to know of one instance in which they are well treated; and I deem it a real honour to be under the roof of him who has uniformly set so laudable an example in this most important concern.

Now observe it is a duty, on my part, to relate what I have here related as to the conduct of Mr Chamberlayne; not a

duty towards *him*; for I can do him no good by it, and I do most sincerely believe that both he and his equally benevolent sister would rather that their goodness remained unproclaimed; but it is a duty towards my country, and particularly towards my readers. Here is a striking and a most valuable practical example. Here is a whole neighbourhood of labourers living as they ought to live; enjoying that happiness which is the just reward of their toil. And shall I suppress facts so honourable to those who are the cause of this happiness, facts so interesting in themselves, and so likely to be useful in the way of example; shall I do this, aye, and besides this, *tacitly* give a *false account* of Weston Grove, and this, too, from the stupid and cowardly fear of being accused of flattering a rich man?

At Botley the riders do their best, "by hallooing and by cracking of whips," to bring out the old enemy, the "Botley parson," but fail to "provoke him to put even his nose out of kennel." They ride over Waltham Chase and Soberton Down—"the very greenest thing that I have seen in the whole county"—and arrive at Hambledon, where Cobbett has some one-sided observations to make on the decay of fairs and markets.

A village it *now* is; but it was formerly a considerable market-town, and it had three fairs in the year. There is now not even the name of market left, I believe; and the fairs amount to little more than a couple or three gingerbread-stalls, with dolls and whistles for children.

When fairs were very frequent shops were not needed. A manufacturer of shoes, of stockings, of hats; of almost anything that man wants, could manufacture at home in an obscure hamlet, with cheap house-rent, good air, and plenty of room. He need pay no heavy rent for shop; and no disadvantages from confined situation; and then, by attending three or four or five or six fairs in a year, he sold the work of his hands, unloaded with a heavy expense attending the keeping of a shop. He would get more for ten shillings in a booth at a fair or market than he would get in a shop for ten or twenty pounds. Of course he could afford to sell the work of his hands for less; and thus a greater portion of their earnings remained with those who raised the food and the clothing from the land. I had an instance of this in what occurred to myself at Weyhill Fair.

When I was at Salisbury, in September, I wanted to buy a whip. It was a common hunting-whip, with a hook to it to pull open gates with, and I could not get it for less than seven shillings and sixpence. This was more than I had made up my mind to give, and I went on with my switch. When we got to Weyhill Fair, George had made shift to lose his whip some time before, and I had made him go without one by way of punishment. But now, having come to the fair, and seeing plenty of whips, I bought him one, just such a one as had been offered me at Salisbury for seven and sixpence, for four and sixpence; and seeing the man with his whips afterwards, I thought I would have one myself; and he let me have it for three shillings. So that here were two whips, precisely of the same kind and quality as the whip at Salisbury, bought for the money which the man at Salisbury asked me for one whip. And yet, far be it from me to accuse the man at Salisbury of an attempt at extortion; he had an expensive shop and a family in a town to support, while my Weyhill fellow had been making his whips in some house in the country, which he rented, probably, for five or six pounds a year, with a good garden to it. Does not every one see, in a minute, how this exchanging of fairs and markets for shops creates *idlers and traffickers*; creates those locusts called middlemen who create nothing, who add to the value of nothing, who improve nothing, but who live in idleness, and who live well, too, out of the labour of the producer and the consumer. The fair and the market, those wise institutions of our forefathers, and with regard to the management of which they were so scrupulously careful; the fair and the market bring the producer and the consumer in contact with each other. Whatever is gained is, at any rate, gained by one or the other of these. The fair and the market bring them together, and enable them to act for their mutual interest and convenience. The shop and the trafficker keeps them apart; the shop hides from both producer and consumer the real state of matters. The fair and the market lay everything open: going to either, you see the state of things at once; and the transactions are fair and just, not disfigured, too, by falsehood, and by those attempts at deception which disgrace traffickings in general.

The route home, through Petersfield and Reigate, leads over Butser Hill, of which Cobbett writes :

Butser Hill belongs to the back chain of the South Downs; and, indeed, it terminates that chain to the westward. It is the highest hill in the whole country. Some think that Hindhead, which is the famous sand-hill over which the Portsmouth road goes at sixteen miles to the north of this great chalk-hill; some think that Hindhead is the highest hill of the two. Be this as it may, Butser Hill, which is the right-hand hill of the two between which you go at three miles from Petersfield going towards Portsmouth; this Butser Hill is, I say, quite high enough; and was more than high enough for us, for it took us up amongst clouds that wet us very nearly to the skin. In going from Mr Goldsmith's to the hill, it is all up hill for five miles. Now and then a little stoop; not much; but regularly, with these little exceptions, uphill for these five miles. The hill appears, at a distance, to be a sharp ridge on its top. It is, however, not so. It is, in some parts, half a mile wide or more. The road lies right along the middle of it from west to east, and just when you are at the highest part of the hill, it is very narrow from north to south; not more, I think, than about a hundred or a hundred and thirty yards.

This is as interesting a spot, I think, as the foot of man ever was placed upon. Here are two valleys, one to your right and the other to your left, very little less than half a mile down to the bottom of them, and much steeper than a tiled roof of a house. These valleys may be, where they join the hill, three or four hundred yards broad. They get wider as they get farther from the hill. Of a clear day you see all the north of Hampshire; nay, the whole county, together with a great part of Surrey and of Sussex. You see the whole of the South Downs to the eastward as far as your eye can carry you; and, lastly, you see over Portsdown Hill, which lies before you to the south; and there are spread open to your view the isle of Portsea, Porchester, Wimmering, Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth, the harbour, Spithead, the Isle of Wight and the ocean.

But something still more interesting occurred to me here in the year 1808, when I was coming on horseback over the same hill from Botley to London. It was a very beautiful day and in summer. Before I got upon the hill (on which I had never been before), a shepherd told me to keep on in the road in which I was till I came to the London turnpike-road. When I got to

within a quarter of a mile of this particular point of the hill, I saw at this point what I thought was a cloud of dust; and speaking to my servant about it, I found that he thought so too; but this cloud of dust disappeared all at once. Soon after there appeared to arise another cloud of dust at the same place, and then that disappeared, and the spot was clear again. As we were trotting along a pretty smart pace, we soon came to this narrow place, having one valley to our right and the other valley to our left, and there, to my great astonishment, I saw the clouds come one after another, each appearing to be about as big as two or three acres of land, skimming along in the valley on the north side, a great deal below the tops of the hills; and successively, as they arrived at our end of the valley, rising up, crossing the narrow pass, and then descending down into the other valley and going off to the south; so that we who sate there upon our horses, were alternately in clouds and in sunshine.

He recalls the peculiar behaviour of clouds on Penyard Hill, in Herefordshire, near Mr Palmer's house, and bids George recount to his father that he has now seen a similar phenomenon in Hampshire.

Cobbett rounds off the record of his tour with these words:

I have put an end to my ride of August, September, and October, 1826, during which I have travelled five hundred and sixty-eight miles, and have slept in thirty different beds, having written three monthly pamphlets, called the *Poor Man's Friend*, and have also written (including the present one) eleven *Registers*. I have been in three cities, in about twenty market towns, in perhaps five hundred villages; and I have seen the people no where so well off as in the neighbourhood of Weston Grove, and nowhere so badly off as in the dominions of the Select Vestry of Hurstbourn Tarrant, commonly called Uphusband. During the whole of this ride, I have very rarely been a-bed after daylight; I have drunk neither wine nor spirits. I have eaten no vegetables, and only a very moderate quantity of meat; and it may be useful to my readers to know that the riding of twenty miles was not so fatiguing to me at the end of my tour as the riding of ten miles was at the beginning of it. Some ill-natured fools will call this "*egotism*." Why is it egotism? Getting upon a good strong horse, and riding about the country has no merit in



it; there is no conjuration in it; it requires neither talents nor virtues of any sort; but *health* is a very valuable thing; and when a man has had the experience which I have had in this instance, it is his duty to state to the world, and to his own countrymen and neighbours in particular, the happy effects of early rising, sobriety, abstinence and a resolution to be active. It is his duty to do this; and it becomes imperatively his duty when he has seen, in the course of his life, so many men, so many men of excellent hearts and of good talents, rendered prematurely old, cut off ten or twenty years before their time, by a want of that early rising, sobriety, abstinence and activity from which he himself has derived so much benefit and such inexpressible pleasure. During this ride I have been several times wet to the skin. At some times of my life, after having indulged for a long while in coddling myself up in the house, these soakings would have frightened me half out of my senses; but I care very little about them: I avoid getting wet if I can; but it is very seldom that rain, come when it would, has prevented me from performing the day's journey that I had laid out beforehand. And this is a very good rule: to stick to your intention whether it be attended with inconveniences or not; to look upon yourself as *bound* to do it. In the whole of this ride, I have met with no one untoward circumstance, properly so called, except the wounding of the back of my horse, which grieved me much more on his account than on my own. I have a friend who, when he is disappointed in accomplishing anything that he has laid out, says that he has been *beaten*, which is a very good expression for the thing. I was beaten in my intention to go through Sussex and Kent; but I will retrieve the affair in a very few months' time, or perhaps few weeks.

## XXVII

### *A Ride to Tring in Hertfordshire*

AFTER the ride from Lyndhurst, some three years elapsed before Cobbett set out on this short trip into the Home Counties. Most of the Journal is concerned with an account of his speech at Tring, but Cobbett has a little to say also on two of his favourite projects—locust trees (now generally known as Robinia or False Acacia) and English Leghorn hat manufacture.

BARN-ELM FARM,

23 Sept. 1829

As if to prove the truth of all that has been said in *The Woodlands* about the impolicy of cheap planting, as it is called, Mr Elliman has planted another and larger field with a mixture of ash, locusts, and larches; not upon *trenched* ground, but upon ground moved with the plough. The larches made great haste to *depart this life*, bequeathing to Mr Elliman a very salutary lesson. The ash appeared to be alive, and that is all: the locusts, though they had to share in all the disadvantages of their neighbours, appeared, it seems, to be doing pretty well, and had made decent shoots, when a neighbour's sheep invaded the plantation and, being fond of the locust leaves and shoots, as all cattle are, reduced them to mere stumps, as it were to put them upon a level with the ash. In *The Woodlands*, I have strongly pressed the necessity of effectual fences: without these, you plant and sow in vain: you plant and sow the plants and seeds of disappointment and mortification; and the earth, being always grateful, is sure to reward you with a plentiful crop. One half acre of Mr Elliman's plantation of locusts before-mentioned, time will tell him, is worth more than the whole of the six or seven acres of this *cheaply* planted field.

Besides the 25,000 trees which Mr Elliman had from me, he had some (and a part of them fine plants) which he himself had raised from seed, in the manner described in *The Woodlands* under the head "Locust." This seed he bought from me; and, as I shall sell but a very few more locust plants, I recommend

gentlemen to sow the seed for themselves according to the directions given in *The Woodlands*, in paragraphs 383 to 386 inclusive. In that part of *The Woodlands* will be found the most minute directions for the sowing of this seed, and particularly in the preparing of it for sowing; for unless the proper precautions are taken here, one seed out of one hundred will not come up; and with the proper precautions one seed in one hundred will not fail to come up. I beg the reader who intends to sow locusts to read with great care the latter part of paragraph 368 of *The Woodlands*.

At this town of Tring, which is a very pretty and respectable place, I saw what reminded me of another of my endeavours to introduce useful things into this country. At the door of a shop I saw a large *case* with the lid taken off, containing *bundles of straw for platting*. It was straw of spring wheat tied up in small bundles with the ear on; just such as I myself have grown in England many times, and bleached for platting according to the instructions so elaborately given in the last edition of my *Cottage Economy*; and which instructions I was enabled to give from the information collected by my son in America. I asked the shopkeeper where he got this straw: he said that it came from Tuscany; and that it was manufactured there at Tring and other places for, as I understood, some single individual master-manufacturer. I told the shopkeeper that I wondered that they should send to Tuscany for the straw, seeing that it might be grown, harvested, and equally well bleached at Tring; that it was now, at this time, grown, bleached, and manufactured into bonnets in Kent; and I showed to several persons at Tring a bonnet made in Kent from the straw of wheat grown in Kent, and presented by that most public-spirited and excellent man Mr John Wood, of Wettersham, who died, to the great sorrow of the whole country round about him, three or four years ago. He had taken infinite pains with this matter, had brought a young woman from Suffolk at his own expense to teach the children at Wettersham the whole of this manufacture from beginning to end; and, before he died, he saw as handsome bonnets made as ever came from Tuscany. At Benenden, the parish in which Mr Hodges resides, there is now a manufactory of the same sort begun in the first place, under the benevolent auspices of that gentleman's daughters, who began by teaching a poor fellow who

had been a cripple from his infancy, who was living with a poor widowed mother, and who is now the master of a school of this description, in the beautiful villages of Benenden and Rolvenden in Kent. My wife, wishing to have her bonnet cleaned some time ago, applied to a person who performs such work at Brighton, and got into a conversation with her about the *English Leghorn* bonnets. The woman told her that they looked very well at first, but that they would not retain their colour, and added, "They will not clean, ma'am, like this bonnet that you have." She was left with a request to clean that; and the result being the same as with all Leghorn bonnets, she was surprised upon being told that that was an "English Leghorn." In short, there is no difference at all in the two; and if these people at Tring choose to grow the straw instead of importing it from Leghorn; and if they choose to make plat, and to make bonnets just as beautiful and as lasting as those which come from Leghorn, they have nothing to do but to read my *Cottage Economy*, paragraph 224 to paragraph 234, inclusive, where they will find, as plain as words can make it, the whole mass of directions for taking the seed of the wheat, and converting the produce into bonnets. There they will find directions, first, as to the sort of wheat; second, as to the proper land for growing the wheat; third, season for sowing; fourth, quantity of seed to the acre and manner of sowing; fifth, season for cutting the wheat; sixth, manner of cutting it; seventh, manner of bleaching; eighth, manner of housing the straw; ninth, platting; tenth, manner of knitting; eleventh, manner of pressing.

I request my correspondents to inform me, if any one can, where I can get some spring wheat. The botanical name of it is *Triticum Æstivum*. It is sown in the spring, at the same time that barley is; these Latin words mean *summer wheat*. It is a small-grained, bearded wheat. I know from experience that the little brown-grained winter wheat is just as good for the purpose: but that must be sown earlier; and there is danger of its being thinned on the ground by worms and other enemies. I should like to sow some this next spring, in order to convince the people of Tring, and other places, that they need not go to Tuscany for the straw.

Of "*Cobbett's corn*" there is no considerable piece in the neighbourhood of Tring; but I saw some plants, even upon the

high hill where the locusts are growing, and which is very backward land, which appeared to be about as forward as my own is at this time. If Mr Elliman were to have a patch of good corn by the side of his locust-trees, and a piece of spring wheat by the side of the corn, people might then go and see specimens of the three great undertakings, or rather great additions to the wealth of the nation, introduced under the name of *Cobbett*.

I am the more desirous of introducing this manufacture at Tring on account of the very marked civility which I met with at that place. A very excellent friend of mine, who is professionally connected with that town, was some time ago apprised of my intention of going thither to see Mr Elliman's plantation. He had mentioned this intention to some gentlemen of that town and neighbourhood; and I, to my great surprise, found that a *dinner had been organized*, to which I was to be invited. I never like to disappoint anybody; and, therefore, to this dinner I went. The company consisted of about forty-five gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood; and certainly, though I have been at dinners in several parts of England, I never found, even in Sussex, where I have frequently been so delighted, a more sensible, hearty, entertaining, and hospitable company than this. From me something in the way of speech was expected, as a matter of course; and though I was from a cold so hoarse as not to be capable of making myself heard in a large place, I was so pleased with the company and with my reception, that, first and last, I dare say I addressed the company for an hour and a half. We dined at two and separated at nine; and, as I declared at parting, for many, many years I had not spent a happier day.

The gentlemen present were men of information, well able to communicate to others that which they themselves had heard; and I endeavoured to leave no doubt in the mind of any man that heard me that the cause of the distress was the work of the government and House of Commons, and that it was nonsense to hope for a cure until the people had a real voice in the choosing of that House. I think that these truths were well implanted; and I further think that if I could go to the capital of every county in the kingdom, I should leave no doubt in the minds of any part of the people. I must not omit to mention, in conclusion, that though I am no eater or drinker, and though I tasted



nothing but the breast of a little chicken, and drank nothing but water, the dinner was the best that ever I saw called a *public dinner*, and certainly unreasonably cheap. There were excellent joints of meat of the finest description, fowls and geese in abundance; and, finally, a very fine haunch of venison, with a bottle of wine for each person; and all for *seven shillings and sixpence per head*. Good waiting upon; civil landlord and landlady; and, in short, everything at this very pretty town pleased me exceedingly. Yet what is Tring but a fair specimen of English towns and English people? And is it right, and is it to be suffered, that such a people should be plunged into misery by the acts of those whom they pay so generously, and whom they so loyally and cheerfully obey?

As far as I had an opportunity of ascertaining the facts, the farmers feel all the pinchings of distress, and the still harsher pinchings of anxiety for the future; and the labouring people are suffering in a degree not to be described. The shutting of the male paupers up in pounds is common through Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Left at large during the day, they roam about and maraud. What are the farmers to do with them? God knows how long the peace is to be kept if this state of things be not put a stop to. The natural course of things is that an attempt to impound the paupers in cold weather will produce resistance in some place; that those of one parish will be joined by those of another; that a formidable band will soon be assembled; then will ensue the rummaging of pantries and cellars; that this will spread from parish to parish; and that, finally, mobs of immense magnitude will set the law at open defiance. Gaols are next to useless in such a case: their want of room must leave the greater part of the offenders at large; the agonizing distress of the farmers will make them comparatively indifferent with regard to these violences; and, at last, general confusion will come. This is by no means an unlikely progress, or an unlikely result. It therefore becomes those who have much at stake to join heartily in their applications to government for a timely remedy for these astounding evils.

## XXVIII

### *Selections from the Northern Tour, the Eastern Tour, the Midland Tour, and Progress in the North*

BETWEEN January 1830 and October 1832 Cobbett made a series of tours in the North, the Midlands, and the Eastern Counties. These were mainly undertaken for the purpose of addressing public meetings in various places, and Cobbett's Journal is largely taken up with accounts of these meetings. There are, however, many descriptive passages of more general interest intermingled with the political observations and a selection of these is included here.

All the way along from Leeds to Sheffield it is coal and iron, and iron and coal. It was dark before we reached Sheffield; so that we saw the iron furnaces in all the horrible splendour of their everlasting blaze. Nothing can be conceived more grand or more terrific than the yellow waves of fire that incessantly issue from the top of these furnaces, some of which are close by the way-side. Nature has placed the beds of iron and the beds of coal alongside of each other, and art has taught man to make one to operate upon the other, as to turn the iron-stone into liquid matter, which is drained off from the bottom of the furnace, and afterwards moulded into blocks and bars, and all sorts of things. The combustibles are put into the top of the furnace, which stands thirty, forty, or fifty feet up in the air, and the ever-blazing mouth of which is kept supplied with coal and coke and iron-stone from little iron waggons forced up by steam, and brought down again to be refilled. It is a surprising thing to behold; and it is impossible to behold it without being convinced that, whatever other nations may do with cotton and with wool, they will never equal England with regard to things made of iron and steel. This Sheffield, and the land all about it, is one bed of iron and coal. They call it black Sheffield, and black enough it is; but from this one town and its environs go nine-tenths of the knives that are used in the whole world; there being, I understand, no knives made at Birmingham;

the manufacture of which place consists of the larger sort of implements, of locks of all sorts, and guns and swords, and of all the endless articles of hardware which go to the furnishing of a house. As to the land, viewed in the way of agriculture, it really does appear to be very little worth. I have not seen, except at Harewood and Ripley, a stack of wheat since I came into Yorkshire; and even there, the whole I saw; and all that I have seen since I came into Yorkshire; and all that I saw during a ride of six miles that I took into Derbyshire the day before yesterday; all put together would not make the one-half of what I have many times seen in one single rick-yard of the vales of Wiltshire. But this is all very proper: these coal-diggers, and iron-melters, and knife-makers, compel us to send the food to them, which, indeed, we do very cheerfully, in exchange for the produce of their rocks, and the wondrous works of their hands.



The ragged hills all round about this town [Sheffield] are bespangled with groups of houses inhabited by the working cutlers. They have not suffered like the working weavers; for to make knives there must be the hand of man. Therefore, machinery cannot come to destroy the wages of the labourer. The home demand has been very much diminished; but still the depression has here not been what it has been, and what it is where the machinery can be brought into play. We are here just upon the borders of Derbyshire, a nook of which runs up and separates Yorkshire from Nottinghamshire. I went to a village, the day before yesterday, called *Mosborough*, the whole of the people of which are employed in the making of *sickles* and *scythes*; and where, as I was told, they are very well off even in these times. A prodigious quantity of these things go to the United States of America. In short, there are about twelve millions of people there continually consuming these things; and the hardware merchants here have their agents and their stores in the great towns of America; which country, as far as relates to this branch of business, is still a part of old England.



I know of no town to be compared with Ipswich, except it be Nottingham; and there is this difference in the two; that Nottingham stands high and, on one side, looks over a very fine country; whereas Ipswich is in a dell, meadows running up above it, and a beautiful arm of the sea below it. The town itself is substantially built, well paved, everything good and solid, and no wretched dwellings to be seen on its outskirts. From the town itself you can see nothing; but you can, in no direction, go from it a quarter of a mile without finding views that a painter might crave, and then the country round about it so well cultivated; the land in such a beautiful state, the farm-houses all white, and all so much alike; the barns, and everything about the homesteads so snug; the stocks of turnips so abundant everywhere; the sheep and cattle in such fine order; the wheat all drilled; the ploughman so expert; the furrows, if a quarter of a mile long, as straight as a line, and laid as truly as if with a level; in short, here is everything to delight the eye, and to make the people proud of their country; and this is the case throughout the whole of this county. I have always found Suffolk farmers great boasters of their superiority over others; and I must say that it is not without reason.



Coming from Ipswich to Bury St Edmund's, you pass through Needham Market and Stowmarket, two very pretty market towns; and, like all the other towns in Suffolk, free from the drawback of shabby and beggarly houses on the outskirts. I remarked that I did not see in the whole county one single instance of paper or rags supplying the place of glass in any window, and did not see one miserable hovel in which a labourer resided. The county, however, is *flat*: with the exception of the environs of Ipswich, there is none of that beautiful variety of hill and dale and hanging woods that you see at every town in Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent. It is curious, too, that though the people, I mean the poorer classes of people, are extremely neat in their houses, and though I found all their gardens dug up and prepared for cropping, you do not see about their cottages (and it is just the same in Norfolk) that *ornamental gardening*; the walks, and the flower borders, and the honey-

suckles and roses trained over the doors or over arched sticks, that you see in Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent, that I have many a time sitten upon my horse to look at so long and so often, as greatly to retard me on my journey. Nor is this done for show or ostentation. If you find a cottage in those counties, by the side of a *by lane*, or in the midst of a forest, you find just the same care about the garden and the flowers. In those counties, too, there is great taste with regard to *trees* of every description, from the hazel to the oak. In Suffolk it appears to be just the contrary: here is the great dissight of all these three eastern counties. Almost every bank of every field is studded with *pollards*, that is to say, trees that have been *beheaded*, at from six to twelve feet from the ground, than which nothing in nature can be more ugly. They send out shoots from the head, which are lopped off once in ten or a dozen years for fuel, or other purposes. To add to the deformity, the ivy is suffered to grow on them which, at the same time, checks the growth of the shoots. These pollards become hollow very soon and, as timber, are fit for nothing but gate-posts, even before they be hollow. Upon a farm of a hundred acres these pollards, by root and shade, spoil at least six acres of the ground, besides being most destructive to the fences. Why not plant six acres of the ground with timber and under-wood? Half an acre a year would most amply supply the farm with poles and brush, and with everything wanted in the way of fuel; and why not plant hedges to be unbroken by these pollards? I have scarcely seen a single farm of a hundred acres without pollards sufficient to find the farm-house in fuel, without any assistance from coals, for several years.



To conclude an account of Suffolk and not to sing the praises of Bury St Edmund's would offend every creature of Suffolk birth; even at Ipswich, when I was praising *that place*, the very people of that town asked me if I did not think Bury St Edmund's the nicest town in the world. Meet them wherever you will, they have all the same boast; and indeed, as a town *in itself*, it is the neatest place that ever was seen. It is airy, it has several fine open places in it, and it has the remains of the famous abbey walls and the abbey gate entire; and it is so



clean and so neat that nothing can equal it in that respect. It was a favourite spot in ancient times; greatly endowed with monasteries and hospitals. Besides the famous Benedictine Abbey, there was once a college and a friary; and as to the abbey itself, it was one of the greatest in the kingdom; and was so ancient as to have been founded only about forty years after the landing of Saint Austin in Kent. The land all round about it is good; and the soil is of that nature as not to produce much dirt at any time of the year; but the country about it is *flat*, and not of that beautiful variety that we find at Ipswich.



To Crowland I went, as before stated, from Wisbeach, staying two nights at St Edmund's. Here I was in the heart of the Fens. The whole country as *level* as the table on which I am now writing. The horizon like the sea in a dead calm: you see the morning sun come up just as at sea; and see it go down over the rim in just the same way as at sea in a calm. The land covered with beautiful grass, with sheep lying about upon it as fat as hogs stretched out sleeping in a sty. The kind and polite friends with whom we were lodged had a very neat garden and fine young orchard. Everything grows well here: earth without a stone so big as a pin's head; grass as thick as it can grow on the ground; immense bowling-greens separated by ditches; and not the sign of dock or thistle or other weed to be seen. What a contrast between these and the heath-covered sand-hills of Surrey, amongst which I was born!



There is one deficiency, and that, with me, a great one, throughout this country of corn and grass and oxen and sheep, that I have come over during the last three weeks; namely, the want of *singing birds*. We are now just in that season when they sing most. Here, in all this country, I have seen and heard only about four sky-larks, and not one other singing bird of any description, and of the small birds that do not sing I have seen only one *yellowhammer*, and it was perched on the rail of a pound between Boston and Sibsey. Oh! the thousands of

linnets all singing together on one tree in the sand-hills of Surrey! Oh! the carolling in the coppices and the dingles of Hampshire and Sussex and Kent! At this moment (5 o'clock in the morning) the groves at Barn-Elm are echoing with the warblings of thousands upon thousands of birds. The *thrush* begins a little before it is light; next the *blackbird*; next the *larks* begin to rise; all the rest begin the moment the sun gives the signal; and from the hedges, the bushes, from the middle and the topmost twigs of the trees, comes the singing of endless variety; from the long dead grass comes the sound of the sweet and soft voice of the *white-throat* or *nettle-tom*, while the loud and merry song of the *lark* (the songster himself out of sight) seems to descend from the skies. Milton, in his description of paradise, has not omitted the "song of earliest birds." However, everything taken together, here, in Lincolnshire, are more good things than man could have had the conscience to *ask* of God.



Nor is the town of Hull itself to be overlooked. It is a little city of London: streets, shops, everything like it; clean as the best parts of London, and the people as bustling and attentive. The town of Hull is *surrounded* with commodious docks for shipping. These docks are separated, in three or four places, by draw-bridges, so that, as you walk round the town, you walk by the side of the docks and the ships. The town on the outside of the docks is pretty considerable, and the walks from it into the country beautiful. I went about a good deal and I nowhere saw marks of beggary or filth, even in the outskirts: none of those nasty, shabby, thief-looking sheds that you see in the approaches to London: none of those off-scourings of pernicious and insolent luxury. I hate commercial towns in general: there is generally something so loathsome in the look, and so stern and unfeeling in the manners of sea-faring people, that I have always, from my very youth, disliked sea-ports; but really, the sight of this nice town, the manners of its people, the civil and kind and cordial reception that I met with, and the clean streets, and especially the pretty gardens in every direction, as

you walk into the country, has made Hull, though a sea-port, a place that I shall always look back to with delight.



Beverley, which was formerly a very considerable city, with three or four gates, one of which is yet standing, had a great college, built in the year 700 by the Archbishop of York. It had three famous hospitals and two friaries. There is one church, a very fine one, and the minster still left; of which a bookseller in the town was so good as to give me copper-plate representations. It is still a very pretty town; the market large; the land all round the country good; and it is particularly famous for horses; those for speed being shown off here on the market-days at this time of the year. The farmers and gentlemen assemble in a very wide street, on the outside of the western gate of the town; and at a certain time of the day, the grooms come from their different stables to show off their beautiful horses; blood horses, coach horses, hunters, and cart horses; sometimes, they tell me, forty or fifty in number. The day that I was there (being late in the season) there were only seven or eight, or ten at the most. When I was asked at the inn to go and see "*the horses*," I had no curiosity, thinking it was such a parcel of horses as we see at a market in the south; but I found it a sight worth going to see; for, besides the beauty of the horses, there were the adroitness, the agility, and the boldness of the grooms, each running alongside of his horse, with the latter trotting at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, and then swinging him round, and showing him off to the best advantage. In short, I was exceedingly gratified by the trip to Beverley: the day was fair and mild; we went by one road and came back by another, and I have very seldom passed a pleasanter day in my life.



Shrewsbury is one of the most interesting spots that man ever beheld. It is the capital of the county of Salop, and Salop appears to have been the original name of the town itself. It is curiously enclosed by the river Severn, which is here large and

fine, and which, in the form of a *horse-shoe*, completely surrounds it, leaving of the whole of the two miles round only one little place whereon to pass in and out on land. There are two bridges, one on the east and the other on the west; the former called the English and the other the Welsh bridge. The environs of this town, especially on the Welsh side, are the most beautiful that can be conceived. The town lies in the midst of a fine agricultural country, of which it is the great and almost only mart. Hither come the farmers to sell their produce, and hence they take, in exchange, their groceries, their clothing, and all the materials for their implements and the domestic conveniences. It was fair-day when I arrived at Shrewsbury.



But this by no means implies that these [Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland] are beggarly counties, even exclusive of their waters, coals, and mines. They are not *agricultural* counties; they are not counties for the producing of bread, but they are counties made for the express purpose of producing meat; in which respect they excel the southern counties in a degree beyond all comparison. I have just spoken of the *beds of grass* that are everywhere seen after the oats and the beans have been cut. Grass is the natural produce of this land, which seems to have been made on purpose to produce it; and we are not to call land *poor* because it will produce nothing but meat. The size and shape of the fields, the sort of fences, the absence of all homesteads and labourers' cottages, the thinness of the country churches, everything shows that this was always a country purely of pasturage.

This, then, is not a country of farmers, but a country of graziers; a country of pasture, and not a country of the plough; and those who formerly managed the land here were not husbandmen, but herdsmen. Fortescue was, I dare say, a native of this country; for he describes England as a country of shepherds and of herdsmen, not working so very hard as the people of France did, having more leisure for contemplation, and therefore more likely to form a just estimate of their rights and duties: and he describes them as having, at all times, in their houses, plenty of flesh to eat and plenty of woollen to wear.

St Augustine, in writing to the pope an account of the character and conduct of his converts in England, told him that he found the English an exceedingly good and generous people; but they had one fault, their fondness for flesh-meat was so great, and their resolution to have it so determined, that he could not get them to abstain from it, even on the fast-days; and that he was greatly afraid that they would return to their state of horrible heathenism rather than submit to the discipline of the church in this respect. The pope, who had more sense than the greater part of bishops have ever had, wrote for answer: "Keep them within the pale of the church at any rate, even if they slaughter their oxen in the churchyards: let them make shambles of the churches rather than suffer the devil to carry away their souls." The taste of our fathers was by no means for the potato; for the "nice *mealy* potato."



The cattle here are the most beautiful by far that I ever saw. The sheep are very handsome; but the horned cattle are the prettiest creatures that my eyes ever beheld. My sons will recollect that when they were little boys I took them to see the "Durham Ox," of which they drew the picture, I dare say, a hundred times. That was upon a large scale, to be sure, the model of all these beautiful cattle: short horns, straight back, a taper neck, very small in proportion where it joins on the small and handsome head, deep dewlap, small-boned in the legs, hoop-ribbed, square-hipped, tail slender. A great part of them are white, or approaching very nearly to white: they all appear to be half fat, cows and oxen and all; and the meat from them is said to be, and I believe it is, as fine as that from Lincolnshire, Herefordshire, Romney Marsh, or Pevensy Level, and I am ready, at any time, to swear, if need be, that one pound of it fed upon this grass is worth more, to me at least, than any ten pounds or twenty pounds fed upon oil-cake, or the stinking stuff of distilleries; aye, or even upon turnips. This is all *grass-land*, even from Staffordshire to this point. In its very nature it produces grass that fattens. The little producing-land that there is even in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire produces grass that would fatten an ox, though the land be upon



the tops of hills. Everywhere, where there is a sufficiency of grass, it will fatten an ox; and well do we southern people know that, except in mere vales and meadows, we have no land that will do this; we know that we might put an ox up to his eyes in our grass, and that it would only just keep him from growing worse: we know that we are obliged to have turnips and meal and cabbages and parsnips and potatoes, and then with some of our hungry hay for them to *pick their teeth with* we make shift to put fat upon an ox.



These sides of the Tyne are very fine: corn-fields, woods, pastures, villages; a church every four miles, or thereabouts; cows and sheep beautiful; oak-trees, though none very large; and, in short, a fertile and beautiful country, wanting only the gardens and the vine-covered cottages that so beautify the counties in the south and the west. All the buildings are of stone. Here are coal-works and railways every now and then. The working people seem to be very well off; their dwellings solid and clean, and their furniture good; but the little gardens and orchards are wanting. The farms are all large; and the people who work on them either live in the farm-house, or in buildings appertaining to the farm-house; and they are all well fed, and have no temptation to acts like those which sprang up out of the ill-treatment of the labourers in the south. Besides, the mere country people are so few in number, the state of society is altogether so different, that a man that has lived here all his life-time can form no judgment at all with regard to the situation, the wants, and the treatment of the working people in the counties of the south.

They have begun to make a railway from Carlisle to Newcastle; and I saw them at work at it as I came along. There are great *lead mines* not far from Hexham; and I saw a great number of little one-horse carts bringing down the *pigs of lead* to the point where the Tyne becomes navigable to Newcastle; and sometimes I saw loads of these *pigs* lying by the road-side, as you see parcels of timber lying in Kent and Sussex, and other timber counties. No fear of their being stolen: their weight is their security, together with their value compared with that of the labour of carrying.



I looked with particular care on the sides of the road all the way through Yorkshire and Durham. The distance, altogether, from Oldham in Lancashire to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is about a hundred and fifty miles; and, leaving out the *great* towns, I did not see so many churches as are to be seen in any twenty miles of any of the valleys of Wiltshire. All these things prove that these are by nature counties of pasturage, and that they were formerly used solely for that purpose. It is curious that there are none of those lands here which we call "meadows." The rivers run in *deep beds*, and have generally very steep sides; no little rivulets and occasional overflowings that make the meadows in the south, which are so very beautiful, but the grass in which is not of the rich nature that the grass is in these counties in the north; it will produce milk enough, but it will not produce beef. It is hard to say which part of the country is the most valuable gift of God; but every one must see how perverse and injurious it is to endeavour to produce in the one that which nature has intended to confine to the other. After all the unnatural efforts that have been made here to ape the farming of Norfolk and Suffolk, it is only *playing at farming*, as stupid and "loyal" parents used to set their children *to play at soldiers during the last war*.

If any of these sensible men of Newcastle were to see the farming in the South Downs, and to see, as I saw in the month of July last, four teams of large oxen, six in a team, all ploughing in one field in preparation for wheat, and several pairs of horses, in the same field, dragging, harrowing, and rolling, and had seen on the other side of the road from five to six quarters of wheat standing upon the acre, and from nine to ten quarters of oats standing along side of it, each of the two fields from fifty to a hundred statute acres; if any of these sensible men of Newcastle could see these things, they would laugh at the childish work that they see going on here under the name of farming; the very sight would make them feel how imperious is the duty on the law-giver to prevent distress from visiting the fields, and to take care that those whose labour produced all the food and all the raiment, shall not be fed upon potatoes and covered with rags; contemplating the important effects of their labour, each

man of them could say as I said when this mean and savage faction had me at my trial, "I would see all these labourers hanged, and be hanged along with them, rather than see them live upon potatoes."









